

GEORGE MEREDITH

AND

BRITISH CRITICISM

(1851-1909)

THÈSE COMPLÉMENTAIRE POUR LE DOCTORAT ÈS LETTRES
PRÉSENTÉE A LA FACULTÉ DES LETTRES
DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE PARIS

PAR

René GALLAND

AGRÉGÉ DE L'UNIVERSITÉ



PARIS

LES PRESSES FRANÇAISES

10 BIS, RUE DE CHATEAUDUN, IX^e

—
1923



GEORGE MEREDITH

AND

BRITISH CRITICISM

1851-1909

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GEORGE MEREDITH. — I. Les cinquante premières années.
1 vol. *Les Presses Françaises*, 1923



Tous droits de traduction et reproduction réservés.

Copyright 1923 by *Les Presses françaises*.

GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED

TO

PROFESSOR L. CAZAMIAN



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a pleasant duty to mention here the Bibliographies of George Meredith compiled by Mr John Lane for the 1900 edition of Mr Le Gallienne's book and by Mr A. J. K. Esdaile, Assistant at the British Museum. They have made this work possible ¹.

I owe warm thanks to my friends Arthur I. Ellis, Assistant at the British Museum, and Henri Peyre, of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, who kindly lent me their assistance whilst I was collecting the necessary material.

1. To my regret, I have not been able to avail myself of Mr M. B. Forman's great work: *A Bibliography of the writings in prose and verse of George Meredith* 8 ³/₄ × 7, XXXII + 324 pp. For the Bibliographical Society. Edinburgh: Dunedin Press (1923).

was far from being generally accepted. His time came in the nineties, and before his death, in 1909, he had been duly praised by Mr Trevelyan and others as "the singer of strange songs" and the teacher in verse of a philosophical doctrine.

*
* *

The aim of the present work is merely to furnish data to the student of Meredith and to the historian of British Criticism. To collect these would have been the dullest of tasks if we had not been thinking all the while of the possible effect of the reviews on George Meredith. Although he proudly declared once to York Powell: "Thank God, I have never written a line to please the public!" still he was sensitive, and the strictures of the critics did not leave him indifferent. The proof of it is that he replied to them, if not in letters to *the Times* or *the Spectator*, at least in his novels, and one might cull interesting remarks of his on Victorian criticism from the pages of *Sandra Belloni*, *Beauchamp's Career* and *Diana*. Occasionally we shall quote some of them.

What one may call the dramatic interest ceases with the interest taken by G. Meredith himself in his critics. There remains another sort of interest; that afforded by the ebb and flow of ideas, the ever-changing and recurring phases of literary fame.

Since 1919, one has witnessed a marked reaction against Meredith: in certain literary circles of London, he who warred against Victorian complac-

ency and conformism, has been tabooed as "Victorian". Nevertheless, the year 1922 has seen a new edition of his works. In five or six years, it will be possible to add a postscript to this catalogue, to trace the curve of British criticism concerning Meredith from 1909 to 1928, and so to realise in some measure the changes occurring in the public taste of Great-Britain within two generations.

*
* *

The sixty years of Meredith's literary life fall roughly into two sections, *Beauchamp's Career* marking the end of his uphill fight. But there are differences between the first decade and the second, on the one hand ; also, on the other, between the period of recognition and the period of fame.

Hence our division into four periods: The first (1851-1861) is one of experiments on the mind of the British nation. Meredith is feeling his way and the Critics give him some encouragement. — The second (1861-1871) is much cooler, and at times the relations are strained.

In the third (1871-1883) Meredith is treated as a writer of note.

The fourth (1884-1909) ushers him into world-fame.

For each book of Meredith's we mention the chief contemporary reviews of it and give a summary or a typical quotation.

I

1851-1861

POEMS

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

(*John W. Parker and Son*, 1851)

*THE LEADER*¹. — July 5 1851.

... "A nice perception of nature, aided by a delicacy of expression, gives to these poems a certain charm not to be resisted; and although they betray no depth of insight nor of feeling; although they are neither thoughtful nor impassioned, yet they rise from out the mass of verses by a certain elegance and felicity of expression which distinguish them."

"*West wind in the woodland*" is then quoted and so are the first four stanzas of "*Love in the Valley*".

The review ends with a criticism of the phrase: "Then Winter, he who tamed the fly", traced back to Dekker's quaint but truthful simile: "untameable as flies".

THE SPECTATOR. — July 5 1851.

"This volume possesses considerable poetical feeling and poetical faculty, but displays more of promise than perfor-

1. *The Leader* was a weekly founded in 1850 (March 30) by men like G. H. Lewes who were in sympathy with Positivism and democratic ideas. Its motto was taken from Humboldt's *Cosmos*: "The one idea which History exhibits as evermore developing itself into greater distinctness is the Idea of Humanity..."

mance". The young writer is then taunted with unconscious imitation of Tennyson, or Keats, or the Brownings, with "a sensuous warmth of image and expression, which, though not passing propriety, might as well be tempered", and, last but not least, with "over-exuberance". The reviewer notices in these poems "a curious quaintness rather than novelty in description", which, is perhaps Mr Meredith's strongest point; but he has also looked upon Society and the questions which now agitate it. The reviewer proceeds to quote from "*The Olive Branch*" and from "*London by Lamplight*" and winds up with "*The Death of Winter*".

THE GUARDIAN. — July 9 1851.

... "*Poems of George Meredith* is a volume of greater power than either of the other two, [The Reign of Avarice, an Allegorical Satire, and Poems by C. H. Hitchings] though Keats, Tennyson and Mrs Browning are to be discerned in every page of it. The author has, however, considerable capacity, and, if he is true to himself, may write things worthy to live. He must, however, mend his morals and his taste. Coarse sensuality is no proof of power, and passionateness and vigour may be attained without impurity. Ovid is bad enough, but "*Daphne*" and "*The Rape of Aurora*" in this volume are worse, from their studied and amplified voluptuousness, than anything in the *Metamorphoses*. Mr Meredith is mistaken if he thinks this either classical or manly. Sophocles and Dante might have taught him better, and Shelley, whom he studies carefully, will show him that the utmost luxuriance of language is consistent with spotless purity of thought. Poetry must be protected from the incursions of the "animalist" theory, or it will become the most powerful, because the subtlest and most unsuspected, agent for the degradation of the age."

The "Guardian" evidently considers that he must "guard" the morals of the nation.

THE ATHENÆUM. — Aug. 23 1851.

Meredith is praised as a singer who may become a poet. Occasional negligences betray his want of mastery. Many of the pieces (e. g. *The Olive Branch*) are set exercises, which betray the young writer. But his juvenilia are of positive merit, — and of more promise. The review quotes "*Loves within the lover's breast*" "whose prettiness has a smack of Herriek in it", "*Will o' the wisp*" — and "*The Death of Winter*". The notice on the whole is full of encouragement

THE CRITIC ¹. — Nov. 15 1851.

Contains a review of George Meredith's *Poems* by W. M. R. (William Michael Rossetti). The gist of it is that Meredith is "a Kind of limited Keats", possessing sensuousness and an "affectionate" love of nature.

The main quality of his poems "is warmth — warmth of emotion, and, to a certain extent, of imagination, like the rich mantling blush on a beautiful face... That he is young will be as unmistakably apparent to the reader as to ourself; on which score various shortcomings and crudities, not less than some excess of this attribute, claim indulgence".

"*Under Boughs of Breathing May*" and "*The Daisy now is out*" are quoted in full, as well as "*Love in the Valley*". After noticing the Tennysonian ring in "*the Olive Branch*" and "*the Shipwreck of Idomeneus*", and "a smack of Herrick" in some of the smaller pieces, he sums up his estimate in this somewhat unexpected manner:

"We do not expect ever quite to enrol Mr Meredith among the demi-gods or heroes... but we shall not cease to look for his renewed appearance with hope, and to hail it with extreme pleasure, so long as he may continue to produce poems equal to the best in this first volume."

(W.-M. Rossetti was twenty-two years old at the time).

FRASER'S MAGAZINE. — December 1851.

"This Year's Song Crop", by Charles Kingsley, devotes several pages to Meredith's volume.

"This, we understand, is his first appearance in print; if it be so, there is very high promise in the unambitious little volume which he has sent forth as his first-fruits. It is something to have written already some of the most delicious little love-poems which we have seen born in England in the last few years, reminding us by their riches and quaintness of tone of Herrick; yet with a depth of thought and feeling which Herrick never reached. Health and sweetness are two qualities which run through all these poems: They are often over-loaded — often somewhat clumsy and ill-expressed — often wanting polish and finish; but they are all genuine, all melodiously conceived, if not always melodiously executed..."

Of the "*Pastorals*", he says: "Careless as hexameters;

1. "*Journal of British and Foreign Literature and the Arts*", founded in 1844. — Was concerned with "the mission of young England" and new literary movements. — Like the *Leader*, it was a weekly.

but honest landscape-painting ; and only he who begins honestly ends greatly ”.

After quoting the first three stanzas of “ *Love in the Valley* ” and praising their spontaneous, “ instinctive melody ”, Kingsley warns Meredith against “ Keats ’ fault of too-muchness ” into which he is apt to fall, and counsels the use of the pruning-knife, taking the “ charming poem ” of *Daphne* as an instance. “ Every stanza is a picture in itself, but there are too many of them, and therefore we lose the story in the profusion of its accidentals. There is a truly Corregiesque tone of feeling and drawing all through this poem, which is very pleasant to us. But we pray Mr Meredith to go to the National Gallery and there look steadily and long, with all the analytic insight he can, at the “ *Venus and Adonis* ” or the “ *Agony in the Garden* ”.. and there see how Correggio dare to indulge in his exquisite lusciousness of form, colour, and *chiaroscuro*, without his pictures ever becoming tawdry or overwrought — namely, by the severe scientific unity and harmonious gradation of parts which he so carefully preserves, which make his pictures single glorious rainbows and precious stones... instead of being, like the jewelled hawk in the Great Exhibition, every separate atom of it beautiful, yet as a whole utterly hideous ”.

Kingsley ends with two more counsels : Mr Meredith should avoid certain Keatsian words, very melodious but un-English ; and he should thoroughly work out his metres, for “ the species of poetry which he has chosen is one which admits of nothing less than perfection. ”

*
* *

George MEREDITH was disappointed by the July criticisms of his poems, although, as he wrote to Ch. OLLIER, he had prepared himself when he published “ to meet with injustice and slight ”. On the other hand, the later reviews brought compensations ; the *Athenæum* was fair, the *Critic* betrayed no lack of sympathy, and Charles KINGSLEY was paternal and kind. But all those were of no avail : he retained the impression that the critics “ had fallen upon his little volume of verse, like a body of barndoor hens on a stranger chick... ” and that he had

been "left with scarce a feather" ¹. Of course, he went on writing poetry, which he published anonymously in "*Household Words*", or "quoted" in his next prose stories, or kept for himself, but he waited for more than ten years before giving another volume of verse to the public. The poetry of which he was full, overflowed into his novels, and, to begin with, into *the Shaving of Shagpat*.

1. Cf. *Diana of the Crossways*. Ch. XXI, towards the end: "Diana's only anxiety concerned young Mr Arthur RHODES, whose position she considered precarious, and who had recently taken a drubbing for venturing to show a peep of his head, like an early crocus, in the literary market".

THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT

AN ARABIAN ENTERTAINMENT

(*Chapman and Hall* — 1856 [1855])

THE EXAMINER. — Dec. 29 1855.

In a one-column review, praises the book, which is “a charming one, full of lively fancy and bright invention”. But there was no need of intimating, in a prefatory note, that “it is not a translation. It is manifestly enough the work of an extremely clever Englishman, and certainly none the less to be enjoyed for that”.

THE SPECTATOR. — Dec. 29 1855.

“*The Shaving of Shagpat* is a mistaken undertaking by an able man. It is intended for an Eastern tale of adventure, but it wants rapidity and purpose in its action, and what is of more consequence, the story wants power to carry the reader along. Perhaps the imitation of Eastern style gets little further than externals. There is a clever adoption of the Oriental manner of intermingling prose and verse, as shown especially in the Fables of Pilpay; but this is rather a clog than in the original.”

[That’s all! Thus does a supercilious critic dispatch a masterpiece to oblivion!]

THE CRITIC. — Jan. 1 1856.

Under the heading : Fiction, eight novels are considered, in order of merit, *the Shaving of Shagpat* being the last and worst.

... “It is an Eastern tale, told in imitation of the Eastern style, and therefore, like all such imitations, a mistake. It is a good story spoilt by the adoption of a bad medium for telling it. This is the reason. An Englishman cannot think Eastern thoughts; the Western mind is cast in a very different mould... Mr George Meredith’s skill in making a story, and humour in relating it, does not compensate for the imperfections of an impossible imitation. If he would write an

English story in the English manner, laying his scenes among places familiar to him, and making his personages of those whom he has met in the actual world about him, he would, we believe, be entirely successful, for he has a playful fancy, much invention, and a pleasant manner of telling a tale, which would be sure to win and keep the attention of an audience. As a mere *brochure* for Christmas, this volume may be accepted ; but the author designed something more than a book for the season, which has failed only because he has attempted that in which nobody has ever yet succeeded. Even burlesque comedy cannot be endured through so many pages ”.

THE ATHENÆUM. — Jan. 5 1856.

Has a notice of about two columns, with nearly one column about “ *Almorán and Hamet* ” and “ *La Reine de Golconde* ” by Boufflers, and another column of quotations. The rest summarily praises “ a work which exhibits power of imagination, ability in expression and skill in construction, deserving its title, “ *An Arabian Entertainment* ” !

THE LEADER. — Jan. 5 1856.

Contains an article of some length, which was contributed by George Eliot, of course anonymously. It opens with considerations on the precedence of the East, then hails “ *The Shaving of Shagpat* ” as “ a work of genius, and of poetical genius.. It is no patchwork of borrowed incidents. Mr Meredith has not simply imitated Arabian fictions, he has been inspired by them, he has used Oriental forms, but only as an Oriental genius would have used them who had been “ to the manner born ”. Having mentioned Gæthe’s *West-Oestliche Divan*, G. Eliot praises in Meredith’s new Arabian Night “ the exquisite delicacy ” of the love-scenes, which is not Eastern, and such Oriental characteristics as “ exuberance of imagery, picturesque wildness of incident, significant humour, aphoristic wisdom ”. She glances at the so-called allegory “ There is plenty of deep meaning in the tale for those who cannot be satisfied without deep meanings, but there is no didactic thrusting forward of moral lessons, and our imagination is never chilled by a sense of allegorical intention predominating over poetic creation. Nothing can be more vivid and concrete than the narrative and description, nothing fresher and more vigorous than the imagery. Indeed, one of the rarest charms of the book is the constant alternation of passion and wild imaginativeness with humour and pithy, practical sense ”.

She commends the merits of the minor tales, particularly of *Bhanavar* and of *Khipil*, and concludes with an image bor-

rowed from the East [*The Song of Solomon* II-3]. Compared with the other fictions of the season, *the Shaving of Shagpat* is "as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood".

THE SUN. — Jan. 8 1856.

This important evening daily [it cost 4 d] had an article headed "The New Author" overflowing with enthusiasm. "Since the "*Vathek*" of William Beckford, we have had no such oriental story as this. . . In Mr Meredith... we at once recognise a writer of real genius, of a genius large, true and original... Henceforth he takes high rank among our chosen favourites by right of his most remarkable power as a humourist, and by reason also of his prolific and splendid imagination".

After an allusion to the *Poems* of 1851 — "pretty and graceful verses for the most part" — the reviewer notices the maturing and multiplying of Mr. Meredith's intellectual capacities, which have produced "the present gorgeous addenda to the grand old masterpiece of the Arabian Nights Entertainments." And yet it cannot be mistaken for a mere translation. "Its prevailing sparkle, whether in conception or in treatment, is proof positive of its originality throughout. It may be regarded by those who list, as a satiric allegory, having reference to a certain hairy freak peculiar to our own generation. It will be perused by others, however, as by ourselves, without regard to any hidden significance in the incidents recounted, but solely with an eye to the luxurious enjoyment of the author's abounding drollery, and of the deft and wondrous play of his quaint, adroit, delicate, erratic, puck-like imagination".

The review, however, finds the introductory chapters somewhat tedious. A minute analysis of the tale then follows, interspersed with warm praise of the poet's and the humorist's fancy.

"... A humorist with an infinite and subtle appreciation of the humorous, ... a humorist of very delightful facetiousness Mr Meredith proves himself to be... as where he paints Abarak... or where he depicts the old monkey "scratching his lower limbs with the mute reflectiveness of age and extreme caution".

After other instances of G. Meredith's humorous and imaginative powers (some of the quotations, in small type, running to great length) the review ends :

"Fantastic the book is — and with reason, as becomes an Arabian entertainment affecting the style and manner of the Oriental story-tellers — but besides it is a production, to our

thinking, as we have already intimated, at once exquisitely humorous and splendidly imaginative. ”

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Jan. 19 1856.

“ ... It is very seldom that an announcement which piques curiosity is followed by a work which satisfies the curiosity ; but in *the Shaving of Shagpat* a quaint title ushers in an original and charming book, the work of a poet and of a story-teller worthy to rank with the rare story-tellers of the East, who have produced, in *the Arabian Nights*, the Iliad of romance.

“ ... Although written in prose, liberally sprinkled with verses, after the Eastern manner, the work is a poem throughout. Not that he gives us that detestable hybrid vulgarly called “ poetical prose ”, with its dissonances of fragmentary metre, and its fine writing which noodles call “ beautiful language ”. The prose is prose — not broken up verse ; the language is simple, picturesque, pregnant — not ornate inanities addressed to the ear ”.

Random specimens are quoted, then the reviewer goes on : “ The style, although Oriental in its figurativeness, is European in its concision ; we miss the luxuriant redundancy of Oriental expression, and are grateful for its absence. ”

A few criticisms follow : “ to verse ”, “ to lute ”, “ to bosom ” are objected to, as being un-English, but the conclusion makes little of them : “ These are very small faults, yet they are all we have espied in a book the charm of which has surpassed that of any eastern work we ever read since the Arabian tales ; and George Meredith, hitherto known to us as a writer of graceful, but not very remarkable verse, now becomes the name of a man of genius — of one who can *create*. ”

THE IDLER, — April 1856.

Has a summary notice of “ a very pleasant and very original volume. ”

THE NEW QUARTERLY REVIEW. — April 1856.

Reviews together “ *The Adventures of the Caliph Haroun-Alraschid*, recounted by the Author of Mary Powell ”, (1855) and *the Shaving of Shagpat*. The first is dismissed as “ the reproduction of an oft-told tale ”. The second is “ destined to be classical ”, for “ whether designed to be an allegory (a supposition not entertained by us) or a story written in imitation of Eastern fiction, we have in every line proof of a gorgeous

imagination, literary skill of a high order and considerable dramatic power ”.

The story of *Bhanavar* is said to be “ full of beauty ”. « For the greatest collection of wonders ever gathered together, with an under-current of satiric philosophy, we recommend the chapter headed *The Palace of Akkis*. But for softer fancy we will take a single, though lengthy extract ”. The end of “ *Goor-elka of Oolb* ” and “ *The Lily of the Enchanted Sea* ” are then quoted. In fine, the reviewer declares :

“ If read, it will be admired. It is remote from those facts that usually occupy the mind of man. But should it attract notice equal to its literary merit, *the Shaving of Shagpat* will be remembered and studied as a classical production, side by side with *Vathek*, *Nourjahad* and *Anastasius* ”. Yet he suggests “ the elimination of some portion of the poetical interpolations, as unequal to the prose and interrupting the narrative ”.

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — April 1856.

About one page of the article on “ *Art and Belles Lettres* ” is devoted to that “ admirable imitation of Oriental tale-telling. ” The argument is practically the same as in “ *The Leader* ”, for it was George Eliot who penned both articles. She however proves here more critical. “ We confess to having felt rather a languishing interest towards the end of the work ; the details of the action became too complicated and our imagination was rather wearied in following them. But where is the writer whose wing is as strong at the end of his flight as at the beginning ? Even Shakespeare flags under the artificial necessities of a *dénouement* ”.

(In the same article, George Eliot notices Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* ; *After Dark*, by Wilkie Collins ; Kingsley’s *Heroes* ; “ *Noctes Ambrosianæ* ; *La Bohême Galante*, by G. de Nerval ” ; “ *Sagen Kränglein aus Tirol* ” ; Stendhal’s *De l’Amour*.)

*
* *

So, in spite of the Spectator’s sneer, and of the Critic’s superior tone, *The Shaving of Shagpat*, thanks to the Leader’s and the Sun’s reviews, received a large meed of praise. Even the Saturday, which had the well-deserved reputation of being hard to please, declared

the book a work of genius. One understands that R. Garnett could write in 1864 that "*The Shaving of Shagpat* had produced something like a sensation". Therefore, when Meredith, many years after, declared that he had been "abused for having written the book"¹, it must have been either a lapse of memory on his part, or an allusion to other voices than the public ones. The fact too that the book went into a remainder may have rankled in his recollection. But it was no fault of the critics, if the public did not follow suit.

1. L., p. 454.

FARINA

A LEGEND OF COLOGNE

(*Smith, Elder and Co.* 1857)

THE EXAMINER. — Aug. 22 1857.

Gives half a column of praise to the book, with, now and then, a kindly ironical touch.

“ In one respect *Farina* is a better book than its predecessor ; for luxuriant as that was in its fancy, Mr Meredith’s Orientalism had a taste of London in it. *Farina*, on the contrary, is German to the core, even to the use of German forms of speech, so cunningly blended with a polished style that the book actually reads like a first-rate translation from the German ”.

The tale is summed up, and then :

“ If we must study to find some fault with this book, we may say that the plot rambles a little now and then ; possibly we could discover more fault if we tried, but why should anybody seek occasion of complaint ? Here is a work of fancy pleasantly combining nearly all the elements that go to form a German legend. It is garnished with a robber band ; rich burghers ; a fair maid and a lover... ; touches of horror from the Castle of Hollenbogenblitz ; the Prince of Darkness ; a water-fairy ; eating of sausage, drinking of beer and Liebfrauen milch ; scenes on the mountains, in the town among gabled streets, in houses, in old castles, in boats on the Rhine ; also with many a scrap of song and ballad bearing further testimony to the author’s wit. The legend, like the triumph of its hero, is an essence, and we do not thank Mr Meredith for his *Farina* without hoping that hereafter he will tell us many stories more ejusdem farinae — of the same grain, we mean ; not of the same amorous and valorous distiller. ”

THE SPECTATOR. — Aug. 22 1857.

Judges *Farina* “ a great improvement upon *the Shaving of Shagpat*, though there is enough of forced quaintness, ... and facetiousness that is only pleasantry to those who can bring

themselves to relish it. The larger portion of the story, however, consists of scenes with action, persons and purpose, that possess interest in themselves, and contribute their quota to the whole, the quaint mode of representation giving character to the narrative. ”

THE LEADER. — August 29 1857.

“ *Farina* is a wild, quaint, surprising story, written with excessive elaboration. Mr Meredith seems to take up one sentence after another, not laying it down until it has been wrought, chased, polished and tinted into a separate bit of art and fancy... He is an heraldic artist in the use of colours in bright contrasts... The effect is novel ; but Mr Meredith’s peculiarities are occasionally wearisome... ”

After giving an abstract of the tale, the reviewer concludes : “ The story, with all its eccentricities, is clever and amusing ”.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Aug. 27 1857.

Expresses disappointment. “ The subject does not seem to us worth handling, and the comic part is more grotesque than piquant. There is much art displayed in the management of the different points of the story, and a neatness and finish in the turns of language and the contrivance of situations. There is also some pretty word-painting of Rhine scenery and cathedral and city effects. But the whole seems to us flat and dull... It is true that the dulness is that of a clever man. There is never anything petty or vulgar, and every page contains a sentence or two which no one but a practised writer could have written ”. But the great enemy of mankind, Sathanas, is a great bore, and we also feel inclined to quarrel with too rich word-painting. “ Mr Meredith weighs us down with the precious stones which he heaps on us whenever he has got any common object of nature to describe. Amethyst, jasper, sapphire, beryl, ruby come cheap on paper. We should prefer a chaster article ”.

THE CRITIC. — Sept. 1 1857.

“ *Farina* is by the author of “ *The Shaving of Shagpat* ” a comical allegory... which obtained a good deal of popularity. The success of it probably prompted him to produce another facetious story, laying the scene of this one at Cologne in the middle-ages...

The author has a taste for the grotesque, and is skilful in the drawing of it, so as to avoid the danger of falling into the absurd, which is just one step beyond it. *Farina* is an im-

provement upon the former work, and cannot fail to amuse the most sober-minded readers ”.

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — October 1857.

George Eliot is again the anonymous writer of the article and she does not welcome the new tale with the same sympathy, leaving enthusiasm aside. Her very summing-up of the story betrays “ something like disappointment ”. She admits that “ Mr Meredith has been very successful in setting before us a vivid picture of the coarse, rough manners... and the deep seated superstition of the “ good old times ” of Chivalry ”; and praises the character of the Jovial Squire Guy the Goshawk. But, “ as a whole (she says), we think “ *Farina* ” lacks completeness, and the ghostly element is not well worked in. The combat between St-Gregory and the Devil is made ludicrous by its circumstantiality. It was not as a jeering satirist that the old monkish legends set forth Sathanas, and there is a clumsiness in the whole affair which accords ill with the boldness and skill displayed in other portions of the tale. We must also protest against Father Gregory’s use of the nominative case “ ye ” instead of accusative “ you ”, monk though he be, and privileged, doubtless, to speak bad grammar at will; nor can we admire many passages in which the author has sacrificed euphony, and almost sense, to novelty and force of expression. With these blemishes, “ *Farina* is both an original and an entertaining book, and will be read with pleasure by all who prefer a lively, spirited story to those dull analyses of dull experiences in which the present school of fiction abounds ”.

THE MORNING POST. — Nov. 20 1857.

On the contrary, declares that „ the reader, in whose memory lingers a pleasant recollection of “ *The Shaving of Shagpat* ”... will not be disappointed ”, and, after an analysis of some twenty lines, concludes : „ The story is told in a spirited and captivating style, and is full of the wild dreamy romance of the German school ”.

THE ATHENÆUM. — Nov. 28 1857.

Farina is “ a full-blooded specimen of the nonsense of Genius... wild, impudent and fierce... full of a riotous, abundant fancy. It is a masque of ravishers in steel — of robber Knights, ... of water-women... of monks. It has also a brave and tender deliverer, and a heroine proper for a romance of Cologne ”.

On the whole “ a real, lively, audacious piece of extravagance ”.

THE ECLECTIC REVIEW ¹. — (Pp. 457-461). May 1858.

" ... The story has its defects, among which we reckon language sometimes coarse, and especially expressions in connexion with religious subjects, which, however common, we deeply and earnestly deprecate. But the Legend is cleverly conceived, and very well told... Yet the talents of popular writers of fiction should be " directed to more elevated and appropriate subjects. The problems of our time and the wants of the men around us, are such as to demand all our best *energies*. "

*
* *

It is interesting to note how sharply the critics were divided, some expressing disappointment, others bestowing warmer praise than before. The Leader's remarks on Meredith's elaborate diction are significant. They were answered in Sandra Belloni : " The point to be considered is whether fiction demands a perfectly smooth surface. Undoubtedly a scientific work does, and a philosophical treatise should. When we ask for facts simply, we feel the intrusion of style. Of fiction it is a part. In the one case, the classical robe, in the other, any mediaeval phantasy of clothing " ². No doubt, Meredith was giving too much attention to style to hope to become a popular writer. His manner in prose was that of the poet, and the public did not approve of it. Again, some good souls were shocked by a certain Rabelaisian freedom of speech and ironical attitude :

« Comme avec irrévérence
Parle « du diable » ce maraud ! »

The same were to be still more shocked by the outspokenness of the following novel.

¹. " *The ecclesiastical review* " should have been its name. It was conducted by churchmen.

². *Sandra Belloni*, p. 63.

THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL

A HISTORY OF FATHER AND SON

(3 vols. *Chapman and Hall* 1859)

THE CRITIC. — July 2 1859.

is reminded, in various ways, of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. "The idea of Sir Austin is misogynism — he is a hater and a contemner of woman. He is one who expects that *woman will be the last thing civilised by man*. He has written a book in which he develops this and similar ideas, and resolves to prove his theory by educating his infant son according to it. Him he will so hedge round with scientific principles that youth shall escape its own corruptness, and he shall be advanced "to a certain moral fortitude ere the apple-disease is spontaneously developed!"

The Critic then proceeds to sum up the book and shows Richard falling in with a dangerous woman: "his education having unfitted him for combating the wiles of such women, this promising youth, fresh from the side of a pure and beautiful wife, falls — falls miserably — to a rouged, champagne — drinking Paphian. The scenes which relate to this catastrophe are dwelt upon by Mr Meredith with too much minuteness."

"Mr Meredith is a man who has evidently thought much and deeply; but there are many passages in his book that lead us to believe that his mind is none of the purest... His work is certainly meat for strong men rather than food for babes..."

It has great merits and great defects, and we believe that these are very evenly balanced."

THE LEADER. — July 2 1859.

finds the story "wild, fantastic, and in some degree enervating", yet "not without its moral or its purpose". It is less a novel than "a philosophical criticism upon the various methods of educating children". But it ends too disastrously. Through the mist of morbidity and gloom which pervades the commencement we seem to recognise a good time coming;

when we come to the end we are unnecessarily and woefully disappointed. G. Meredith can write well and conceive grandly, but he has yet to learn to correct, or at any rate to conceal his eccentricities ”.

THE ATHENAEUM. — July 9 1859.

“ This “ *Ordeal* ” is about as painful a book as any reader ever felt himself inexorably compelled to read through, in spite of his own protests to the contrary... The book is very clever, with a fresh, vigorous vitality in the style ; but it is *not* true to real life or human nature ; only true to an abstract and entirely arbitrary idea... None of the characters are real, live human beings ; but then they are all so like life, their conversation is so bright and spirited, that it affects the reader like a painful reality to see such cruelty and blindness, and blundering, such child’s play with the most sacred mysteries of life, even though he is quite aware of the fiction that lies at the root of this “ seeming show... ”

The only comfort the reader can find on closing the book is... that it is not true. We hope the author will use his great ability to produce something pleasanter next time.

That is all. Almost in the same breath the reviewer praises “ *Through the Shadows* ” (by the author of “ *Sidney Grey* ”) as “ an excellent and very interesting novel ”.

THE SPECTATOR. — July 9 1859.

“ *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is, like “ *The Caxtons* ”, a Shandean novel of contemporary English life, but freer and less mechanical in its Shandyism. Whilst Sir Bulwer Lytton is related to Sterne rather as a plagiarist than as an imitator, Mr Meredith remodels the elementary ideas he borrows... A likeness in certain points may also be traced between it and the works of the author of *Headlong Hall*, which themselves are offshoots of the great Shandy stock. ”

After comparing Sir Austin and Mr Shandy, each with an early son to train, and each with “ peculiar and transcendental views as to the manner in which that work was to be wrought out to the most brilliant results ”, the reviewer sums up the story as far as the meeting of Richard and Lucy, and describes it as “ a moving and suggestive one, in which there is more of vigorous thought, imagination, wit, humour and pathos, than would suffice to make the fortune of a score of average novels. ”

The conclusion is thus :

" The doctrines Sir Austin holds on the mutual relation. of father and son are such as are more or less vaguely entertained by multitudes of well-meaning blunderers of the present day ; the only difference is that in Sir Austin's mind they exist in peculiar clearness and force, and he acts upon them with peculiar consistency. "

Omitting the notices of " the Saturday Review ", July 9 1859, and " The Illustrated London News ", Aug. 13 1859, let us turn to the most important review, that of

THE TIMES. — Oct. 14 1859.

" The writer of an extraordinary novel must expect a more than ordinary strict criticism. It is a compliment to him and a duty to the public... Mr. Meredith is an original writer, and his book is a powerful book, penetrative in its depth of insight, and rich in its variety of experience. But it is also very oracular and obscure in parts, and, as we conceive, extremely weak in the development of its main purpose. On the other hand, it is so crystalline and brilliant in its principal passages, there is such purity mingled with its laxness, such sound and firm truth in the midst of its fantastic subtleties, that we hesitate whether to approve or condemn ; and we have a difficulty even in forming a judgment on such strange contrarieties. "

After this introductory paragraph, Meredith is said to belong to a class of fictionists, " more honoured than popular ", the *humorist* class. " The humorist draws more from his humour than from obvious facts — from his modes of thought than from the manners of his time... He is subjective, self-searching, self-evolved and sustained... and his success is proportionate to the power which is in him. But his success is not a popular success, for it is personal and distinctive ; nor can he be tried by popular tests which are the devices of the average mind... Mr. Meredith's characters are more entirely symbols and shadows of his thought than ordinary denizens of the world about him. It would be unfair to try him by the standard relations of novels to life ; for, as a humorist, he conceives humorists, and includes them in a world of his own shaping.

But it is fair and appropriate to try if his world holds together on its own principles, and with this view, to question the plan and object of its creation...

As we conceive, the purport of Mr Meredith's book is to explode the system of an offended humorist — one Sir Austin Feverel, a despiser of women, into whose disparagement of the gentler sex there enters a large measure of pique and per-

sonal resentment, occasioned by the treachery and desertion of his wife." Then follows an analysis of the novel, with a blame for "the unnecessary sacrifice of an innocent victim", and a criticism of the thesis itself. "The System is not responsible for Richard's temptation and neglect of his wife; for Richard's nature as depicted should at least have prevented this...; nor is it the System which retains him in London... The System is arraigned, but it is never tried fairly, its merits or demerits are unsolved to the last. It is not the system, but the luck of discovering a Lucy which makes Richard up to a certain point a satisfactory result. It is not the system, but Richard's inconsistency which undoes this result, and it is pure accident which at the last precipitates the catastrophe. The system is tried, but it can neither be acquitted or condemned on this evidence, and the verdict to be taken on Mr Meredith's thesis is simply "not proven".

"At the same time, let us fairly acknowledge the striking merits of this imperfect book." Clare, Lady Blandish, Mrs Berry, Adrien Harley are approved of. Then comes the conclusion :

"One other word remains — This book has been charged with impurity, and tabooed, as we hear, in some quarters by the over-fastidious. It certainly touches a delicate theme, and includes some equivocal situations, but of impurity, in the sense of any corrupting tendency, we see not a trace, and we will not endorse the imputation. It is a novel, in short, which may be read by men and women with perfect impunity if they have no corrupt imagination of their own to pervert the pure purpose of the author".

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Oct. 1859.

contrasts the *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* with "*The Fool of quality, or the History of Henry, Earl of Moreland*", by H. Brooke, Esq. just republished by Kingsley, "with an extravagantly laudatory preface"; the subjects of both works being the same, the careful development of a young man by an old one. But there is between them the whole difference that separates the xixth from the xviiith century..

The praise which follows is somewhat perfunctory : " ... If any one is attracted by profound observation, humour, passion and tenderness, let him procure this book and a quiet day for its enjoyment. The characters are numerous and well-defined; among them will be found representatives of almost every prevailing conception of life; but true to its time, the book offers no solution of any of the difficulties it lays open to

us ; the xixth century struggles through it with but faint glimpses of its goal.

The Shaving of Shagpat had already shown us that any work of Mr Meredith's might be expected to abound in poetical images, rich language and facile invention ; but the present work rises far above the limited circle of an Arabian tale, and shows its author to be as observant of his contemporaries as deep in Oriental fiction "

*
* *

If, as we believe, George Eliot wrote the above, she did not quite succeed in being fair and failed to convey the real greatness of the book. Who shall explain why the author of *Adam Bede* felt a constantly lesser sympathy for the author of *Richard Feverel* ? But *the Spectator* had a glimpse of George Meredith's originality and *the Times*' three-column review was an earnest attempt to appreciate him. However the Puritans carried the day, the book was "denounced over the country by clergymen, at book-clubs, and it fell dead ¹. " No second Edition was called for until 1878.

1. L., p. 432.

EVAN HARRINGTON

(3 vols. *Bradbury and Evans* — 1861)

(reprinted from *Once a week*, where it appeared serially

Feb. 11 to October 13 1860)

(It was owing to this fact, we believe, that the reviews were few in number and confined to three, in England).

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Jan. 19 1861.

praises *Evan Harrington* "as a surprisingly good novel on a very unpromising subject. The story is new in conception, new in the study of character, fresh, odd, a little extravagant, but noble and original... Mr Meredith has made the discovery that if the farcical side of life is taken seriously, it is full of fine tragedy and comedy.. A shy, honest man is contrasted and coupled with a frank, dashing, honest girl, and they are separated by tailordom. There is no end to the struggles of passion and principle that this opening may not lead to. Very judiciously, Mr Meredith makes the tailor's love triumphant early in the story. He is not kept low too long. He is soon ennobled by the love bestowed on him by a heroine who deserves to be a heroine. The mental difficulties and social struggles of a couple advanced thus far give much more room for subtle delineation and for highly-strung feeling than if the tailor were only emancipated at the end of the story from his goose and cabbage...

The story has of course its defects... Tailordom in the clouds is a novelty, but we have a little too much of tailordom in the clouds...

It pays the penalty of originality : the whole story turns on the feelings of a particular sort of tailor and a particular sort of tailor's betrothed. But there is the Countess and this prominent character is so well drawn as to raise Mr Meredith to a very considerable height in the list of novel writers.

The minor characters belong to a lower walk of art. They are not bad or good. Many men and women could have struck them off, and not a few of them are familiar friends in the world of farces. The rapid young gentleman, shunning care,

quoting scraps of poetry and finally marrying a lady's maid ; the eccentric bachelor, as whimsical as he is rich ; the drawling, offensive, hard lording, have long been " household words " on the comic stage. Juliana, although she is not very pleasant to read about, lends at once plausibility and interest to the story. "

The conclusion is that "*Evan Harrington* is not a great work, but it is a remarkable one, and deserves a front place in the literature that is ranked as avowedly not destined to endure. "

(Outspoken, but kind and just on the whole, but for the final prophecy.)

THE SPECTATOR. — Jan. 19 1861.

finds Mr G. Meredith " a writer of uncommon ability ". His former works show talent and culture not of the ordinary kind. *Evan Harrington* is as clever as any of those and without some of their faults...

" Mr Meredith's vein of humour in literary composition is clearing and fining down as he grows older... His charm to an intelligent reader is that he thinks and speaks of what he has seen and known for himself. "

Then a quotation is given from the first chapter (the Marquis story).

THE EXAMINER. — March. 23 1861.

devotes but a short notice to the book, giving the gist of the story " which is cleverly told in vigorous and pointed English, and abounds in shrewd sketches of character. "

*
* *

So, in spite of Mrs Grundy's quarrel, Meredith was gaining ground in public esteem. After the first mutterings of the lion of British prudery, he had been ready to promise " never again to offend young maids ". The critics, although disturbed by a writer who never gave them the same kind of book to review, had labelled him as a humorist and recognized his cleverness, and power. But, during the next ten years (1862-1871) he fared worse

at their hands. His sensitiveness was more than once stung to the quick, especially in the case of the 1862 *Poems*, of *Sandra Belloni*. (*Emilia in England*), and of *Vittoria*. "Have you ever met a Reviewer? he asked a friend in a letter. It is curious to see how small that thing that stings can be¹." No wonder then that he felt tempted to defend himself or to retaliate. Here are two samples of Mr Meredith's fencing: "A writer who is not servile, and has insight, must coin from his own mint. In prose, we owe everything to the license our poets have taken in the teeth of the critics." (*Sandra Belloni*)². Now for a homethrust: "The office of critic is now, in fact, virtually extinct; the taste for tickling and stripping is universal and imperative." (*Rhoda Fleming*.)

1. *L.*, p. 143 (May 18-1864).

2. *S.B.*, p. 64.

II

1862-1871

MODERN LOVE

AND POEMS OF THE ENGLISH ROADSIDE, WITH POEMS
AND BALLADS

pp. viii, 216, *Chapman and Hall*, 1862.

THE CRITIC. — May 17 1862.

detects the same qualities in Meredith's poetry as in his novels: "much humour joined to very uncommon powers of observation and graphic painting". The review is short and on the whole insignificant.

THE PARTHENON. ¹ — May 17 1862.

praises the volume (which ranks far above the multitude of versifiers who fancy themselves poets) for its variety, and "Meredith's deep inextinguishable love of Nature", which is "the yearning love of a son to a mother to whom he owes all he is."

This volume is "the probable addition of a new original genius to the goodly company of England's poets."

THE SPECTATOR. — May 24 1862.

Mr George Meredith's "Modern Love".

Clever bold men with any literary capacity are always tempted to write verse as they can say so much under its

1. The Parthenon, formerly Literary Gazette, was owned by James Virtue, J. C. Morison's brother-in-law.

The review quoted above was written by Morison (a friend of Hardman's, and Meredith's) aided by another friend, Hamilton, of the British Museum. (Cf. S. M. Ellis: *A Mid-Victorian Pepys. The Letters and Memoirs of Sir William Hardman*, p. 125).

artistic cover which in common prose they could not say at all... Mr George Meredith is a clever man, without literary genius, taste or judgment, and apparently aims at that sort of union of point, passion and pictorial audacity which Byron attained in *Don Juan*. There is, however, no kind of harmonious concord between his ideas and his expressions... On the whole, the effect of the book on us is that of clever, meretricious, turbid pictures, by a man of some vigour, jaunty manners, quick observation and some pictorial skill, who likes writing about human passions, but does not bring either imaginative power or true sentiment to the task. The chief composition in the book, absurdly called *Modern Love*, is a series of sonnets intended to versify the leading conception of Gæthe's "*Elective affinities*". Mr Meredith effects this with occasional vigour, but without any vestige of original thought or purpose which could excuse so unpleasant a subject, and intersperses it, moreover, with sardonic grins that have all the effect of an intentional affectation of cynicism. This is not quite always the case, however.

The reviewer, then, proceeds to quote : " Along the garden terrace... " and " I play for seasons ; not Eternities ! "... and takes exception at " the face of Music mute " applied to the Moon ; also at the two lines :

" *When the renewed forever of a kiss*
*Sounds thro' the listless hurricane of hair*¹. "

About the sonnet : " You like not that French novel ?... " he says : " This is wretched jocularly, as pointless as it is coarse... The thing has no kind of right to the title "*Modern Love*". "*Modern Lust*" would be certainly a more accurate, though not a true title ; there is something of real love, but more of the other, embodied in the sonnets.

In the verses which do not hinge on this sort of subject, there is the same confusion between a " fast " taste, and what Mr Meredith mistakes for courageous realism, " poetic Pre-Raphaelitism. " Part of "*the Rosanna*" is then quoted, and described as " a spasmodic ostentation of fast writing ". " There are moods in which a man of high animal spirits is apt to think that any nonsense which amuses himself in an irrational moment is good enough to amuse the world ; and because Mr George Meredith was amused for the moment with the incongruity of fancying a greasy-coated cabman with his arm round Calliope, and with his own poor pun on that person "driving the world", he thought it, we suppose, a mark

1. Altered in later editions to

" Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair. "

of intellectual pluck to print it. It really is only noisy vulgarity, which, in so clever a man, — for he is clever and graphic in his way — is exceedingly unworthy. There is a deep vein of muddy sentiment in most men, but they should let the mud settle, and not boast of it to the world. Mr Meredith evidently thinks mud picturesque, as, indeed, it may be, but all picturesqueness is not poetry. One gains a graphic picture of a good deal of interior mental mud without verse to help us. Mr Meredith thinks we do not get enough, and the solution given here is sometimes a very thick one indeed. The best thing in the book is : “ *Juggling Jerry* ”, which is not vulgar or tawdry, as so much of the volume is. ”

The above notice betrays a kind of personal animosity towards George Meredith ; it reads as though he had been met and disliked by his reviewer (R. H. Hutton ?) However, the main opinions, if not the tone, of the *Spectator* were shared by

THE ATHENÆUM. — May 31 1862.

“ The story of *Modern Love* is rather hinted at than told. The phases of the husband’s torture are elaborately set forth, often with spasmodic indistinctness, but now and then with real force and imagination... ” The style is termed “ abrupt and obscure ” : however the whole tale is well summed up, but the theme is dismissed as morbid.

Then the “ more wholesome poems ” in the volume are noticed : *Grand-Father Bridgeman*, *The Old Chartist*, *Juggling Jerry*, *Cassandra*, which is “ free from the blemishes of caprice and obscurity ”, *Phantasy*, *By the Rosanna*. A propos of the last two poems, the reviewer asserts that “ in poetry, even humour should not be prosaic and coarse, but Mr Meredith is both, ” and denounces the “ whim of thrusting bald realities into poetry ” with the consequent outrage upon taste.

He winds up with a quotation from the “ *Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn* ” and the final comment :

“ Few readers, we think, will deny the poetic feeling and the truth of observation which our extract reveals. But if these gifts are to produce a lasting result, Mr Meredith must add to them a healthier purpose, a purer taste and a clearer style. ”

Against the *Spectator*’s unfriendly criticism, A. C. Swinburne protested by a well-known letter which was printed in

the number of June 7. 1862. His first point was that any work by "one of the leaders of English literature" "must claim at least a grave consideration and respect..." "But (he went on) even if the case were different, and the author were now at his starting-point, such a review of such a book is surely out of date. Praise or blame should be thoughtful, serious, careful, when applied to a work of such subtle strength, such depth of delicate power, such passionate and various beauty, as the leading poem of Mr Meredith's volume; in some points, as it seems to me (and in this opinion I know that I have weightier judgments¹ than my own to back me), a poem above the aim and beyond the reach of any but its author. Mr. Meredith is one of the three or four poets now alive whose work, perfect or imperfect, is always as noble in design, as it is often faultless in result. The present critic falls foul of him for dealing with "a deep and painful subject on which he has no conviction to express." There are pulpits enough for all preachers in prose; the business of verse-writing is hardly to express convictions; and if some poetry, not without merit of its kind, has at times dealt in dogmatic morality, it is the worse and all the weaker for that. As to subject, it is too much to expect that all schools of poetry are to be for ever subordinate to the one just now so much in request with us, whose scope of sight is bounded by the nursery walls; that all Muses are to bow down before her who babbles, with lips yet warm from this pristine pap, after the dangling delights of a child's coral, and jingles with flaccid fingers one knows not whether a jester's or a baby's bells. We have not too many writers capable of duly handling a subject worth the serious interest of man. As to the execution, take almost any sonnet at random out of this series, and let any man, qualified to judge for himself of metre, choice of expression and splendid language, decide on its claims. And after all, the test will be unfair, except as regards metrical or pictorial merit; every section of this great progressive poem being connected with the other by links of the finest and most studied workmanship. Take for example, that noble sonnet, beginning:

We saw the swallows gathering in the skies,

a more perfect piece of writing no man alive has ever turned out; witness these three lines, the grandest perhaps of the whole book:

1. [a possible allusion to D. G. ROSSETTI and ROBERT BROWNING].

*And in the largeness of the evening earth,
Our spirit grew as we walked side by side ;
The hour became her husband, and my bride ;*

but in transcription it must lose the colour and effect given it by its place in the series ; the grave and tender beauty, which makes it at once a bridge and a resting-place between the admirable poems of passion it falls among. As specimens of pure power, and depth of imagination at once intricate and vigorous, take the two sonnets on a false passing reunion of wife and husband ; the sonnet on the rose ; that other beginning :

*I am not of those miserable males
Who sniff at vice, and daring not to snap,
Do therefore hope for Heaven.*

And again that earlier one :

All other joys of life he strove to warm

Of the shorter poems which give character to the book I have not space to speak here ; and as the critic has omitted noticing the most valuable and important (such as *the Beggar's Soliloquy*, and *the Old Chartist*, equal to Béranger for completeness of effect and exquisite justice of style, but noticeable for a thorough dramatic insight, which Béranger missed through his personal passions and partialities), there is no present need to go into the matter. I ask you to admit this protest simply out of justice to the book in hand, believing as I do that it expresses the deliberate unbiassed opinion of a sufficient number of readers to warrant the insertion of it, and leaving to your consideration rather their claims to a fair hearing than those of the book's author to a revised judgment. A poet of Mr Meredith's rank can no more be profited by the advocacy of his admirers than injured by the rash or partial attack of his critics.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

MORNING POST. — June 20 1862.

The long article devoted to the Poems was written by Meredith's friend, Capt Maxse. After praising Meredith's fiction, "*Shagpat*", "*Rhoda Fleming*", "*Evan Harrington*", Maxse turns to Meredith's poetic genius : "There is a strength reactionary from the tenderness, a tenderness approved by the strength, and a creation arising from the two which, if taken up in any way but superficially must permanently establish its author's reputation. But, alas ! there is so much

smooth and glib verse current that it is doubtful whether there is any very large public left with a sense of what is fine and subtle... ”

The poems are then praised severally for their brightness, or power, or sweetness, or inspiration. “*Cassandra*” is quoted in full. After giving lines from “*Margaret’s Bridal Eve*”, Maxse winds up by declaring : „ Enough has been given to make all genuine lovers of poetry prefer the satisfaction of referring to the volume for themselves. ”

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — July 1862.

“ In Mr George Meredith’s poems, there is a freshness and vigour not often met with at the present day. Moreover there are no traces in them of imitation of any of our popular poets. Their faults are frequent roughness and occasional obscurity. Some of Mr Meredith’s lines are very terse and effective. Several passages in his poems prove him to be a sharp observer and skilful analyst of human motives. Let the following serve for an example :

*How many a thing which we cast to the ground,
When others pick it up becomes a gem !
We grasp at all the wealth it is to them ;
And by reflected light its worth is found.*

.

There is much truth in this remark by “ The Old Chartist ”

*“ She suffered for me : — women, you’ll observe
Don’t suffer for a Cause, but for a man. ”*

... How much is condensed in the following short lines :

*“ Life is but the pebble sunk ;
Deeds the circle growing. ”*

It is unfortunate that the subjects of many of these poems are tales of guilt and sin, of women’s temptation and fall. The manner in which Mr Meredith treats his subjects convinces us that he has real poetical talents, and is capable, too, of producing still more effective poems than those contained in this volume. ”

From the article headed “ BELLES-LETTRES ”.

*
* *

Meredith himself has summed up the general attitude of the Press towards the 1862 Poems. “ The notices that

have appeared fix favourably on *the Roadside poems*, but discard "*Modern Love*", which, I admit, requires thought, and discernment, and reading more than once. *The Saturday Review* has not yet spoken. One paper calls me a genius — one, a meretricious, clever, bold man. I find, to my annoyance, that I am susceptible to remarks on my poems, and criticisms from whipsters or women absolutely make me wince and flush... " and, four days later : " The Spectator abuses me. *The Athenæum* mildly pats me on the back ; the "*Parthenon*" blows a trumpet about me : the " Sat-R. " makes no sign. ¹ "

The silence of the latter magazine was disappointing to George Meredith, and so was the article sent to the Morning Post by Captain Maxse who was too " sparing " ².

In 1863, Meredith wrote to Mrs Ross. " You saw... that the Saturday Review has gently whipped me for "*Modern Love*". I am not the worse. And doubtless the writer meant well " ³.

1. *L.*, p. 73.

2. *Id.*, p. 75.

3. *L.*, p. 130.

EMILIA IN ENGLAND

(3 vols. *Chapman and Hall*, 1864)

THE READER. — April 23 1864.

The article, signed G. is from the pen of Dr Richard Garnett, who appears well aware of Meredith's high aims and talents. " Few writers, he says, could dispose of resources adequate to so sustained a display of intellectual pyrotechnics as that which has now lasted Mr Meredith through nine volumes. It is comparatively easy to devise humorous situations, but this is farce. Mr Meredith's works are the best modern representatives of the genteel comedy of a hundred and fifty years since. "

Comedy ! the word is out for the first time in connection with Meredith, and the critic proceeds with rare insight :

" Incident and character are not neglected ; but both are subordinate to dialogue. The personages... are rather types of character than individuals. " They remind him of Congreve's Maskwell, who was not " copied from the living model .. " Next to the intellectual brilliancy of his [Mr Meredith's] writings, their most salient feature is their artificial aspect. A principle of intelligent selection seems to have presided over their genesis and development. The story is carefully chosen for the sake of some favourite idea snugly bedded in the center of it, a Psyche-germ swathed in a rich cocoon of illustration. The personages are all selected with a similar view, and their sayings and doings meted out with the nicest accuracy. The style again is highly *recherché*, spiced with epigram, and elaborated even to obscurity... To read Mr Meredith in his turn is to season the feast of literature with an exquisite condiment ; to read nobody but Mr Meredith would be like making a dinner of salt. Attic of course. "

Coming to Emilia in England Dr G. notices that " the plot is a variation on the theme of " *Evan Harrington* ", that admirable novel ", with the additional drama of Emilia and Wilfrid.

On the whole, a very genuine appreciation of " a work

scintillating throughout with wit and humour ", a criticism full of insight.

THE ATHENÆUM. — April 30 1864.

has a favourable review of a " charming story ". Emilia is pronounced a " fascinating character ". The style is brilliant, but, " fatiguing after a while ". " It resembles flint and steel struck together — the succession of sharp blows eliciting sparks. It could be a great improvement if the author could conceal his art and write more simply. "

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — May 28 1864.

(The article, unsigned, was by Mrs W. Hardman whom George Meredith thanks, in a letter to her husband, for " giving her criticism very gently ").

The reviewer was more puzzled than pleased by this novel, where British sentimentalism is analysed too minutely to her taste. " The whole set of people seem to live in a kind of cloudland, and to behave as no English family ever behaved or thought of behaving. But that is immaterial, for all the story and all the persons in it, are only vehicles for the analysis of character. Mr Meredith has set himself to paint in the three sisters Pole the union of an " internal sublimity with the utmost attention... to the minutest usages of Society. "

" The sentimentalism of the Miss Poles gives way under the pressure of misfortune and of love-making. The sick-room, where their father is confined, is too stern a reality for sentimentalism. Any one could see that..., but it requires a much more ingenious and subtle artist to show that young men who have flirted sufficiently long with vague, dreamy, sentimental girls, will at last bring them to the realities of life by kissing them. "

To Emilia and Wilfrid only a shorter paragraph is granted and the reviewer concludes in questioning " the great value of all this profound analysis of the characters of young women "

THE EXAMINER. — July 23 1864.

has no irony to qualify his warm appreciation of Mr Meredith's original wit and of his " clear, accurate English, individual, yet unaffected... " He understands the main interest of the book to be " sentimental ; it is the rightful King Sentiment carrying war into the borders of the usurping King Sentimentality. " He notices the influence of Jean-Paul Richter

in many a passage of true sentiment and humour... "But there is imitation of no man, Englishman or German."

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — July 1864.

in "Belles-Lettres", p. 253

The reviewer tries to find out how it is that Mr Meredith has a "strangely restricted circle of readers." The main reasons are "his originality; a subtlety of expression and a delicate indication of modes of thought and feeling, which demand an amount of attention not willingly given; the essentially dramatic character of his talent, and the artistic manner in which he makes his very numerous actors grow under the reader's eye. In his pages you find no ready-made type whose conduct can beforehand be predicated... Again, the peculiar tone in which Mr Meredith criticizes the features of modern Society is at first calculated to ingratiate him with no conceivable section of that Society."

After praising the wonderful wealth of imagination and thought lavished upon the numerous characters, the review ends: "This lay sermon of a novel, which treats the phenomenon of modern society with a conscientious study, is recommended to all those who can appreciate it."

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — July 1864.

in "Novels with a purpose" (by Justin Mc. Carthy).

The article (pp. 24-49) considers: 1) *The ordeal of Richard Feverel*. — 2) *Emilia in England*. — 3) *Lost and Saved*, by the Hon. Mrs Norton. — 4) *Recommended to Mercy*. — "In each of these books the philosophical critic of humanity, the social reformer or the social accuser stands behind the story-teller and inspires and guides his utterance."

"Mr George Meredith is a novelist of the philosophic school. He is one of the boldest and the ablest of his class in our day. No man we know of has more resolutely gone into literature with a total disregard of popularity... His novels are not amusing, they require thought."

The ordeal of Richard Feverel is then criticized from the artist's point of view: "We read it fascinated, we lay it down dissatisfied... We cannot at all see why poor little Lucy... should be sacrificed... We do not feel that we are brought any nearer by the experience of Richard Feverel to the solution of that great social question about the sowing of the human wild oats" (p. 32).

"*Emilia in London*" (sic) is "more of a novel and less of

a philosophic essay. The style has fewer eccentricities in it... Its supreme merit consists in the fact that it has added to fiction one thoroughly original and perfectly natural human character : Emilia is admirably drawn, and so is Mr Pericles, but most of Mr Meredith's secondary characters are not realities : they are walking types, embodied aphorisms ; conceits, or fancies, or crotchets of the author put into human shape... Their conversation is often unintelligible ; a mere interchange of verbal subtleties and quiddities... The result is that he (the author) rarely reaches, still more rarely commands, the feelings of the reader, although he almost always engages the intellect. Only where he has to deal with Emilia does he abandon himself to the mere impulses of his artistic genius. This makes its latest work a sign of progress since the days of Richard Feverel "

The next paragraphs emphasize the same idea, viz, that Mr Meredith always seems to write with a purpose..., is too much of a thinking man ; ... the critical faculty is too strong in him to let him write great works of fiction. Yet " he has much of a poet's nature, and only needs the courage to trust it more fully. Among his poetic qualities is one peculiarly rare in our days... that which appreciates and idealizes as woman's highest charm, her womanhood. He can therefore describe the growth of young and passionate love as few in our day can or will do. "

He is able to give us, instead of the world of crinoline fiction heroes and heroines endowed with passions. " Women have especial need, as the world goes, to be shrewd, self-reliant and strong ; and we do all we can in our literature to render them helpless, imbecile and idiotic. We are disposed to give a friendly reception to George Meredith and Mrs Norton, were it for nothing but the mere fact that conventionality might be inclined to shriek out against them. "

*
* *

Sandra Belloni was, on the whole, welcomed by the critics, and its success was great enough to catch the attention of E. D. Forgues, who the same year gave a condensed translation of it to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (Nov. 15 Dec. 1 Dec. 15 1864). Still Meredith writes to Jessopp (May 18 1864) : " I get slaps for having written "*Emilia*". I am " eminently " this or that,

unpleasant, in Review style... ” “ ... She moves, which is good. A favourable touch to her in the “ Saturday ” or “ Times ” would launch her into more than the middle of a second edition¹. ”

The book had been published at his risk and for his profit.

1. *Let.*, p. 143. In April, he had written : “ I foresee that I shall get knocks on the head from reviewers, and should like to be out of hearing for 3 months, but Courage ! ” (*L.*, p. 141).

RHODA FLEMING

(A story. 3 vols. *Tinsley Brothers*, 1865)

THE ATHENÆUM. — Oct. 14 1865.

begins by "rendering tribute to its acceptable qualities amongst which may be mentioned an abundance of unaffected humour, two or three excellent pictures of rural life, much vigorous writing, and occasional manifestations of genuine poetic insight into human nature." But... "anxious to amuse, Mr Meredith is morbidly afraid of being thought prosy; and in places he is betrayed by this eagerness and dread into exhibitions of factitious sprightliness and ponderous gaiety. Wishing to shine, he commits the fault that he most desires to avoid; and by striving to put his thoughts in piquant language, he at times renders it no easy task for the reader to catch his meaning." The reviewer objects to the phrase "a crucible-woman", and to the sentence: "Algernon waited dinnerless until the healthygoing minutes distended and swelled monstrous and horrible as viper-bitten bodies, and the venerable Signior Time, became of unhealthy hue." Why did not Mr Meredith say: "Algernon waited dinnerless for a couple of hours?" ... Besides, Mr Meredith lacks "the romance-writer's peculiar art". The story seems to be slipping through the reader's fingers as soon as *Dahlia Fleming* is sent to London.

To sum up this notice, Rhoda Fleming is not an "interesting novel", because neither in style nor manner it conforms to the current pattern.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Oct. 14 1865.

contains friendly and thoughtful criticism from a reviewer who rejoices to find that "Mr Meredith has, for a time at least, abandoned the over-subtle and unfruitful speculations upon character and society" which characterized the "ill-chosen theme" of *Sandra Belloni*.

M. Meredith escapes from the vices of feebleness of ordinary fiction. He has the power and takes the trouble to exhibit new characters. Of course, he has vices of his own. "He is occasionally obscure in his reflections, and inconsiderately

argues in seven-league boots. " The fault is the natural result of one of his chief excellences. He realises so vividly to himself the people of his story that he forgets the reader's ignorance. The same vividness of conception may perhaps account for the oblique way in which the incidents of the story are revealed.

« But these passing obscurities may well be forgotten in the vigorous and impressive painting of the more prominent figures as well as in the admirable manliness with which Mr Meredith has treated a situation that is commonly made the occasion either of sermonizing or of sentimentalism... To him the woman who sacrifices herself for passion is what she is, and no more...

" In the same way, the stern sister is drawn without a touch of exaggeration either of sympathy or of caricature ". She is human in her flexibility before changing circumstances, and to show the growth of character placed in a given situation is, in its own way, " a very distinct triumph of art ". In the character of Edward Blancove, the author produces the same effect of movement, but... with less success.

" Mr Meredith's exclusive devotion to play of character would seem to lie at the root of what is his chief defect — weakness of construction. His situations hang too loosely together... He leaves us a little too abruptly... Towards his men and women, he feels too much like an Epicurean god. "

After praising and quoting " some admirably fresh and vigorous sketches of country life and nature, " the reviewer declares Algernon Blancove " a capital study of minor rank. " This youth is one of great Nature tom-fools... However, " the most worthless creature is most serviceable for examination, when the microscope is applied to them, as a simple study of human mechanism ". This sentence may be said to be the secret of Mr Meredith's workmanship. It is essentially microscopic, and those who have a sufficiently strong taste for art to relish such studies will find *Rhoda Fleming* very well worth reading. Besides this, the story itself is eminently interesting — almost too interesting, in fact ; to leave us tranquil enough for the appreciation of the more substantial part. "

MORNING POST. — Oct. 18 1865.

Another article, nearly one column in length, from a friendly pen — dealing chiefly with the characters, the drawing of which exhibits " a careful study of human nature ".

" There will be many, probably, who will complain of the occasional difficulty in following the thread of the story.

This is the author's weak point... His fancy is so prolific, his humour so genuine, and his command of language so great, that he gives rein to his pen, and goes bounding along, carrying his reader with him until he suddenly finds "a check", and has to retrace his steps to pick up "the secret". But when found, he starts off again, and one of the best of his many admirable points is that he never stumbles into the dulness of ditch water...

His book comes like a fresh, healthy, invigorating breeze from the country... Many a profitable lesson may be learnt from his perusal. Mr Meredith may be cordially congratulated on having produced a story with so few blemishes and so many excellent qualities. "

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Jan. 1866.

finds Mr Meredith's fault of over-cleverness very conspicuous in his present novel. " His heroine, Farmer William, John, Master Gammon and the scenes in which they are placed evidently owe their inspiration to a study of George Eliot. And Mr Meredith, throughout the three volumes, is constantly attempting to give us those homely descriptions of farm life, those rustic sayings, which stamp such an individuality upon all that George Eliot writes. But his power is here weak, and his cleverness only makes his weakness more apparent. He never reaches George Eliot's incisiveness; he never gains that concentrated force by which in one or two words she reveals a character... "

To sum up, between George Eliot and George Meredith, there is " the gulf that yawns between genius and mere cleverness. " Next to George Eliot, the reviewer puts... Mrs Trafford, who " as far as she goes, is excellent. "

* * *

In spite of the praise of the Saturday and the Morning Post, *Rhoda Fleming* had a very poor sale. The publishers had given Meredith £ 400 for it. The same year, he made over to Lewes the use of the copyright of *Vittoria* for issue in the "Fortnightly Review", in consideration of the sum of £ 250; "all subsequent rights to the use of it being reserved... »¹

1. *Let.*, p. 175.

VITTORIA

(3 vols. *Chapman and Hall*, 1867)

(Reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review* Jan. 15 to Dec. 1, 1866)

PALL MALL GAZETTE. — Jan. 25 1867.

“ Mr Meredith is a writer of such unquestionable power and originality as to make it a matter of regret that he should so often choose to be careless and obscure... The plot and the people who move therein may be clear and distinct to his mind, but only a painstaking and intelligent reader, with a good memory and a habit of reference, can distinguish one from the other, or account for their being in particular situations at all. The persons come unexpectedly... and depart unaccountably... Mr Meredith's style in writing also contributes to this obscureness. ”

In the course of a two-column analysis of “ *Vittoria* ”, the reviewer notes that “ Mr Meredith has caught the spirit and life of the people he paints, and gives the sharp incisive proverb at every turn, or the expressive gesture which finishes the half-uttered sentence... ”

“ We commend the book to our readers. If the plot is obscure, the incidents are full of interest, the dialogue exceedingly spirited, and some admirable and effective bits of word-painting are not wanting ”.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Feb. 2 1867.

notices “ a wide disproportion between the expenditure of ability and the result obtained. ” The style “ gives us the impression of prose striving to be poetry. It is laborious, and yet the labour has not been carried far enough... ” Similarly, in the plot, Mr Meredith “ makes demands upon the attention of the reader of which he is probably not aware ”. He forgets to make plain the incidents he is relating. The characters make their exits and their entrances in an eccentric way. Yet “ they are, in our opinion, the strongest point of Mr Meredith's very clever, though rather unreadable, performance. ”

That last phrase sums up the review.

THE SPECTATOR. — Feb. 9. 1867.

repeats with some acrimony and develops the foregoing criticism : *Vittoria* is " a novel brimful of cleverness, and yet not good, aiming at a type of excellence far beyond what it attains, and full of a sense of effort, of which the most disagreeable element is the abundance of clever affectations, in which the writer seems to be endeavouring to make himself believe that he has caught the stroke of true genius. It is intended to be almost a prose epic of the unhappy Italian Revolution of 1849..."

" The story as a whole wants unity and ease. The style often gasps with effort. The greater number of the characters, including the heroine... are ambitiously conceived Shadows, which seem to be striving vainly after a personality which they never attain... The literary egotism in the foreground dims or eclipses all the subjects on which he exercises his art... The dialogue is spasmodic and enigmatic, aiming at epigram, and often only succeeding in being odd. But the main defect in all aspects of the tale is the same, — effort, mannerism, affectation, — the incessant reminder in all portions of the story, descriptive, dramatic, pathetic, that here is a restless talent, often almost, sometimes quite, succeeding in saying fine things, but never without an intense effort..."

Then the disposition to *gloat* over touches of physical gesture or manner is severely noted. Mr. Meredith wants " a physical symbol of some emotion " to produce Swinburne-like effects. Luigi and Barto Rizzo are nevertheless pronounced " very striking studies ". " It is when Mr Meredith strikes the region of sentiment that he is almost sure to fail ". Much of the description of the Italian Revolution is found very clever, " and so is the local colouring, though generally put on with Mr Meredith's usual conscious air.

Vittoria is a tale which, for the novelty of its subject, for the evident study which it embodies, and for two or three very cleverly drawn characters and scenes, is well worth reading once, but which is written in such a falsetto key that, apart from the crowd of uninteresting and dim figures on the canvas, no one would wish to read it again. "

THE ATHENÆUM. — Feb. 23 1867.

Although its note is friendly, is somewhat bewildered and asks : " How are human beings with limited faculties to understand all the distracting threads of this unmerciful novel ? " But, then, by way of compensation, each episode has its own interest, and the most insignificant personage has the stamp

of being a genuine human being, and not a lay figure... There is an excellent and spirited account of the campaign...

... The book is well and carefully written... a piece of good and honest hard work. "

*
* *

Thus, to most of the reviewers, *Vittoria* was a failure. George Meredith could not but note with melancholy in a letter to Swinburne dated March 2 1867 : "*Vittoria* passes to the limbo where the rest of my works repose... I am afraid it must be true that the style is stiff ; but a less condensed would not have compassed the great amount of matter. — I see the illustrious Hutton¹ of the "Spectator" laughs insanely at my futile effort to produce an impression on his public. I suppose I shall have to give up and take to journalism, as I am now partly doing². " But the freer style and manner of "*Harry Richmond* " were to be " a spanking bid for popularity " ³.

1. R. H. Hutton (1826-1897) became in 1861 joint-proprietor and editor of " The Spectator ". His "*Essays, Theological and Literary* " (1871) fully bear out the following description of him by Professor Saintsbury : " He goes to the ant and is happy : with deans, and bishops, and archbishops, and cardinals he is ready to play their own game. But if Literature, as Literature, makes any advances to him, he leaves his garment in her hands and flees for his life. " (*A History of Criticism*. III, p. 544).

2. *Let.*, p. 189.

3. *Id.*, p. 143.

THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY RICHMOND

(3 vols. *Smith, Edder and Co*, 1871)

(reprinted from Cornhill, Sept. 1870 to Nov. 1871)

THE ATHENÆUM. — Nov. 4 1871.

describes the novel as “ a sketch in three volumes in spite of the extraordinary minuteness of description ”. Mr Meredith “ leaves his mysteries unsolved ”, is “ fond of exercising his reader’s ingenuity by giving only the very slightest hint at the real causes of the most important events ”, — narrates in “ short staccato sentences, with an immense number of full stops ”, shapes his facts by the exigencies of his story ; uses odd forms sometimes, such as “ gloriful ” and “ modest ” ; constantly shifts the scene, without explaining the movements of the actors.

DAILY NEWS. — Nov. 6 1871.

hails Mr G. Meredith’s new novel as “ a remarkable book. ” Deep thoughts all aglow with physical colour, an elliptical power of language which is sometimes betrayed into obscurity, cynicism tempered by a large-hearted sympathy with human failure, — these are the usual characteristics of Mr George Meredith’s works ; but in *Harry Richmond*, he has expressed genius with unwonted clearness, and, under the guise of a romance, has worked out a careful study in moral physiology.

... He shows in Roy Richmond the canker of hereditary vices unobscured by the splendour of hereditary pride of place. Inheriting a grand manner and a moral nature decayed to the core, he fares ill in the work-a-day world of simple, manly truth and self-relying toil. There is a scenic glamour in him for most women and for many men, but the reader can criticise the tawdry reality and estimate at its full length the contrast afforded to it by rough Squire Beltham. These two men, differing as rock and quicksand, are the real heroes of the book. As single studies of character, each would have been admirable, but brought into direct antagonism, they are masterpieces... The only blot in the treatment of the old

Squire is his abrupt departure from the scene... Such a man's death would have been as characteristic as his life.

Ottilia also secedes from the story in an unsatisfactory manner... Possibly the author had not the power nor the patience to tell much of this prismatic nature. Ottilia was one of those women whom men love passionately and know very little about... Janet is of the type most Englishmen desire to have their wives, although human weakness may lead their erring fancy towards an Ottilia...

The book abounds in varied and incisive description of character. Not a page can be read carelessly ; its profound philosophy, its almost excess of subtlety command attention and generate thought, while the sensitiveness to Nature's beauties which vibrates like a passion throughout the work, and the deep underglow of its human sympathy, complete the attraction of a book in every sense remarkable."

THE EXAMINER. — Nov. 11 1871.

shows an utter want of appreciation, being pleased neither with the plot (" Mr Meredith indulges in the wildest vagaries of plot-making ") nor with the style (" Mr Meredith writes with meaningless sententiousness "). Yet he admits that Mr Meredith has some power in constructing his puppets ; all the leading figures of the novel are sharply cut... but they are only puppets. Mr Meredith describes English life, not as it is, but as it pleases him to represent it, and his description is alike unpleasant and unprofitable. This is the more to be regretted, because he throws out hints and collects rough material enough to stock two or three good novels with proper handling.

The notices of *The Daily Telegraph* (Nov. 20 1871) *The Graphic* (Nov. 25) and *The Morning Post* (Dec. 2) were more or less friendly. — The latter ended on this note : " The novel is a decidedly clever book, by a cultivated writer. The plot, incident and character are all good. We specially thank Mr Meredith for his rough-hewn Squire Beltham — the Squire Western of the 19th century... "

THE SPECTATOR [R. H. Hutton]. — Jan. 20 1872.

The review is a reluctant admission of the novelist's " really great powers ". " This book shows originality, wealth of conception, genius and not a little detailed knowledge of the world... and yet it would be far truer to say that it has the

stuff for half-a-dozen first-rate novels in it, than that it is a first-rate novel itself. It wants, in the first place, movement, stream, current, narrative-flow, and secondly something of ease and simplicity of style. ”

Ottilia is a “ beautiful picture ”, but Janet is “ not much interesting ” and Harry is “ radically uninteresting ”.

Instead of trying to understand George Meredith’s conception, the reviewer sketches what he *ought* to have done, in order to connect together the two scenes between Richmond Roy and the Squire.

Due praise is given to R. Roy’s character. “ The insanity in which the author makes it terminate is most truly as well as firmly conceived ”. But there is “ a terrible flatness about the hero himself ” — and “ a love of affectation in the style ” — that spoil the novel.

WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Jan. 1872.

(Belles Lettres, p. 274)

“ Mr Meredith has long since won a recognised position in literature. Whatever he writes, and he has written much, is distinctively marked by real genius. He possesses in no ordinary degree insight into character, humour and wit, descriptive power and lastly real poetical feeling. He has made for itself a unique position... ”

Criticism is found most difficult in the case of *Harry Richmond*. “ Whilst we are reading, we are fascinated and spell-bound. It is not until we have closed the book, and the spell has lost some of its charm, that we feel ourselves to be critically inclined. Criticism, especially of the cold blooded kind, would, we fear, make short work of Mr Meredith’s pleasant extravagance. For our own part, we are more disposed to call attention to the gay fancies and the wealth of poetry which the author has so freely scattered over his pages. ”

BLACKWOODS’ MAGAZINE. — June 1872.

“ Mr George Meredith’s wild, half-mad, and wholly clever performance ” has been found too long. The first part “ is charming ”. The imbroglio of the latter part is termed “ a thicket of incidents and emotions through which the reader can hardly force his way. ”

*
* *

It is curious to note that daily papers spoke more favourably of the book than weekly magazines. Readers of the Cornhill must have cared for *Harry Richmond*, very well illustrated by Du Maurier. They did not know it was Meredith's work, and some attributed it to Lever! As a three-volume novel, it did not "move", wrote Meredith: "It was confounded by Mudie with the quantity coming out¹."

1. *Let.*, p. 229.

III

1871-1883

The seventies mark the turning of the tide. The 1876 reviews of Beauchamp's Career may be said to represent almost every variety of friendly criticism, from the baldest and plainest to the most intelligent and enthusiastic. The new generation, sick of the praises lavished on Dickens and George Eliot, were hailing Meredith as a master and wondering aloud at the total indifference of the many towards him. A Meredith cult began among the young men who jeered at the Philistines for their lack of appreciation. Through the later seventies and the eighties one may notice the rise and progress of Meredith's fame.

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER

(3 vols. *Chapman and Hall*, 1876 [1875])

(Reprinted from the *Fortnightly Review*, serially, August 1874 to December 1875).

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER. — 2 vols. Tauchnitz 1876. (The year before The Tauchnitz collection had published : THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL, 2 vols.)

ATHENÆUM. — Jan. 1 1876.

The review distinctly has the ring of respect. It begins : " It is not probable that Mr Meredith will ever be a popular author. In the first place, it is no easy matter to read one of his books. We do not mean that his language is obscure ; but his extraordinary reticence, so to speak, his refusal to allow himself an author's right of knowing what his characters do, when they are, as one may say, out of his sight, make it necessary for the reader to be on the alert for the slightest allusions and indications if he would not altogether miss the thread of the story. Then he is anti-sensational to the last degree, and seldom or never allows any violent action to take place on the scene before the eyes of his readers...

In more respects than one, he seems to us to have a share of the spirit of the father of tragedy. There is a truly Sophoclean irony about the perfectly pitiless way in which he allows his characters to play their little drama... ; he has reached that high stage of the novelist's art when his own predilections have no more influence on the fortunes of his characters than Mr Freeman's, say, on the results of the battle of Bouvines. Of course, a story written on these principles is delightful to the attentive reader or student of mankind. He is not let all at once into the secrets of the heart of every personage, but is left to discover their character by means of study, every whit as close as is required in real life. "

No epilogue : " He ends his story once and for all... In mathematical phrase, the rest are only functions of the variable Beauchamp ; and when that vanishes, they vanish too. " The ending of " Beauchamp " is compared to that of Richard Feverel, and both are approved of.

After quoting a few pithy sayings, as instances of Meredith's peculiar humour and wit, the reviewer praises his style, and notices much improvement since *Harry Richmond*. "It is still somewhat fluctuating, reminding us now of Thackeray, now of Bulwer, once or twice even of Victor Hugo, but more often than not, and when it is best, it is the Author's own. *Richard Feverel* placed him high among English novelists, but *Beauchamp's Career* has, we think, distinctly raised him; and we do not see any reason why he should not eventually reach a point where, in the opinion at least of those who regard novels as works of art, and not merely collections of anecdotes, he would have scarcely a rival among the writers of fiction of our generation."

The notices which appeared in the *Standard* (Jan. 4), in the *Examiner*, the *Graphic*, and the *Times* (Jan. 8) were equally favourable. Let us hear what the *Examiner* has to say.

THE EXAMINER [G. Barnett Smith]. — Jan. 8 1876.

states the reasons of Meredith's lack of popularity. "Not only his novels call for mental exercise in a greater degree than any other, but this author is always so terribly in earnest he cannot be a comfort to the ordinary reader." Then the reviewer praises the present novel, (one of the best of the season) its cleverness and power, even its writing, in spite of a few hard nuts to crack.

After a long analysis of the novel, he concludes; "There is intellectual wealth in it to set up half-a-dozen writers of fiction. The characters of Beauchamp, Mr. Romfrey, Dr Shapnel and Renée are wonderfully real and life-like. We can fancy many readers saying that *Beauchamp's Career* wants a key, but it will repay anyone all his trouble in endeavouring to find it."

THE ACADEMY. — Jan. 15 1876.

(through the pen of R. F. Littledale, D. D.)

was not satisfied. "Though written with much pains, considerable cleverness and occasional sparkle, it exhibits too much effort... We rise from the perusal with the conviction that it is not as a novelist that Mr Meredith can look for a permanent name in literature. As critic or essayist there is probably a career open to him."

PALL MALL GAZETTE. — Feb. 5 1876.

The reviewer is fully alive to the defects and merits of this novel, to the rich imagination and the masculine intellect of George Meredith. He notices "the lack of that nameless, incommunicable gift which could have welded these fragmentary excellences into a splendid whole". But the excessive versatility of his [George Meredith's] genius affects merely the detail of execution, and not the main progress of his story.

"Mr Meredith has drawn for us one of those later Quixotes whose fate is the more pathetic in that they tilt vainly at real giants, which only the rest of the world conspire to call windmills". The art in tracing the hero's history is declared sufficient, but is found "most consummately displayed" in Mr Meredith's treatment of Cecilia and Renée. "Cecilia Halkett is a study of remarkable subtlety and force... She forms... a picture to which nothing can be added and from which nothing needs to be taken away". But "for dramatic interest and mastery over the play of passion, we must turn to the character of Renée". The "perfect artistic tact" of George Meredith in dealing with Renée's flight and Beauchamp's refusal of her is duly praised.

"The subordinate personages of the book are as skilfully drawn... The marked proof of this skill is the completeness with which the author has succeeded in individualizing a series of characters belonging generically to the same type in respect of social position and politics... The feudal Toryism of Everard Romfrey, the martinet unidea-ed Toryism of Colonel Halkett, an excellently studied character, the hard-headed Philistine Toryism of Blackburn Tuckham, and the sceptical eclectic conservatism of Seymour Austin and Stukeley Culbrett, belong to four separate and clearly marked types, specimens of which will probably have found a place in the experience of most readers. Nor is there less felicity of discrimination displayed in the Radicalism of Nevil, of Dr Shrapnel and of Lydiard. Mr Grancey Lespel represents thoroughly well the "landed variety" of the old whig. His wife, the middle-aged woman of the world, with her decorously regulated taste for scandal, is a living portrait touched off in a few deft strokes. In two characters only — that of Tom Turbot, the editor of the Liberal provincial journal, and that of Lord Palmet in the earlier scenes in which he is introduced, — does Mr Meredith show any tendency to drop into caricature. But in both these cases we are distinctly of opinion that he has overstepped the line which divides comedy from burlesque. We may add here, by the way, that it may be a question whether he has

not also exceeded the licence of fiction in making the affair of the " French Colonels ", which occurred in 1858, precede the Crimean war."

... As it is written that " John Bull must not be puzzled in his reading ", the reviewer adjures George Meredith to make less exhaustive demands on the receptive capacity of the " general reader ", and not to indulge the fatal habit of mystification.. " Irony indulged seemingly at the writer's own expense, serious thought which ends bewilderingly in sarcastic paradox, passion which seems all the while to be smiling at its own vehemence " repel the plain readers. They " wonder what the fellow means ", and for him all is then over. Self-criticism, again, in the very midst of creative effort — that practice so false to art, yet so alluring to the artist conscious of the critic within him, is a sure repellent of readers... except of them who resemble him ; " but these, for obvious reasons, must always be few in number. As for the rest — in other words, the bulk of common-place humanity, Mr Meredith will never win and retain them, so long as he continually puzzles them with introverted irony, confuses them with a too restless agility of thought, and dazzles them with perpetual epigram. If he would gain the audience and the reputation he deserves, he must endeavour to control the unregulated movements of his genius ; and he has a double inducement to do so in that for him the path to a wider popularity is also the path to a more perfect art."

The reviewer's name was H. D. Traill, a genuine critic, who, writing on " The Novel of Manners " in the October number of *The Nineteenth. Century*, [1875], had thus alluded to George Meredith :

" ... The close objective study of social *types* — not of their superficial peculiarities only, but of their inner being — appears to be becoming a lost art. Where, indeed, are we to look for the observation, the humour, to say nothing of the *wisdom*, which was brought to bear upon this branch of the art of fiction by its great masters in the past ? We have but one living novelist with the adequate intellectual equipment, but Mr George Meredith is poet, philosopher and politician, as well as novelist, and we must be satisfied, I suppose, that brilliant studies of manners form an element, and an element only, in his varied and stimulating work."

For such appreciation, George Meredith was grateful and he invited H. D. Traill to Box Hill.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — May 13 1876.

expresses and develops some of Traill's views. It sees in *Beauchamp's Career* the study of individual character combined with the expression and discussion of modern ideas. Mr Meredith was fitted for this task, being never content with the mere artist's enjoyment of the permanent truths of character, his active and restless intellect ever seeking material for argument and speculation.

Here is a happy combination, for " Politics are made the test by which individual character is tried..., and in the skill with which each actor is made to express and reveal his whole nature in the presence of these political ideas lies the artistic triumph of the book. "

This is most conspicuous in Nevil Beauchamp's character, which is then analysed at some length.

The art of Mr Meredith in conducting dialogue, the rapidity of his method are exemplified by quotations from the Night in Venice and the Tourdestelle episode. " But perhaps the stroke of strongest and truest art is that by which the author closes the career of his hero ". (Quotation).

" The combined study of the permanent truths of character, and of the shifting and unsettled problems of political and social life necessarily imparts a discord which no skill can wholly conceal ; but when the writer by the nature of his own genius is constantly tempted to this two-fold labour, it is better that he should choose, as Mr Meredith has chosen in *Beauchamp's Career*, a theme which provides in itself the material necessary for the exercise both of his creative and critical faculties ".

On the whole, *Beauchamp's Career* met with appreciation. The Spectator remained significantly quiet ; this last work had silenced " the illustrious Hutton ", while it elicited from James Thomson (B. V.) a " note " which combines the fervour of the Scotch and the enthusiasm of the poetic Spirit. His " Note on George Meredith on

the occasion of Beauchamp's Career " appeared in the May number of a small review for Free-Thinkers :

THE SECULARIST. — May 1876.

(reprinted in " Essays and Phantasies " 1881)

Here is the first paragraph : " George Meredith stands among our living novelists much as Robert Browning until of late years stood among our living poets, quite unappreciated by the general public, ranked with the very highest by a select few. One exception must be made to this comparison... ; whereas Tennyson, the people's greatest poet, is immeasurably inferior to Browning in depth and scope and power and subtlety of intellect, George Eliot, the public's greatest novelist, is equal in all these qualities, save, I think, the last, to her unplaced rival, while having the advantage in some deservedly popular qualities, and the clear disadvantage in but one, the faculty of conceiving and describing vigorous or agonistic action, — in the fateful crises her leading characters are apt to merely drift. "

The causes of George Meredith's unpopularity are then examined : ... " Not only does he appeal to the conscience residing in thoughtfulness, he makes heavy and frequent demands on the active imagination — monstrous attempts at extortion which both the languid and the sentimental novel reader bitterly resent.

... He loves to suggest by flying touches rather than slowly elaborate... His personages are characterised by an image or a phrase... and as with their outward, so with their interior nature. Marvellous flashes of insight reveal some of their profoundest secrets, detect the mainsprings and trace the movements of their most complete workings, and from such data you must complete the characters, as from certain leading points a mathematician defines a curve. So with his conversations.

... Moreover, he delights in elaborate analysis of abstruse problems, whose solution when reached are scarcely less difficult to ordinary apprehension than are the problems themselves ; ... pursuing countless distinct movements where the common eye sees only a whirling perplexity...

In exposing his defects for the many, I have discovered some of his finest qualities for the thoughtful and imaginative few... He has a wonderful eye for form and colour, especially the latter ; a wonderful ear for music and all sounds ; a masterly perception of character, a most subtle sense for spiritual mysteries. His dialogue is full of life and reality... ; he is

great in the fiery record of fiery action..., he has this sure mark of lofty genius, that he always rises with his theme, growing more strenuous, more self-contained, more magistral, as the demands on his thought and imagination increase. "

However, there was no immediate demand for a second edition.

ON THE IDEA OF COMEDY AND THE USES OF THE COMIC SPIRIT,

a lecture delivered at the London Institution Feb. I, 1877, was printed with amendments in *The New Quarterly Magazine*, April 1877, but it had been previously reported by the *Times* (Feb. 5) and the *Spectator* commented upon it in an article headed : " Mr George Meredith on Laughter " :

THE SPECTATOR. — Feb. 10 1877.

From the lecture, as reported in the daily papers, we understand that Mr Meredith makes the capacity for " thoughtful laughter ", as distinguished from broad laughter, one of the most unerring as well as subtle tests of civilisation. As a broad test, it works nearly perfectly. As applied to the stage and to England, it is not quite applicable : " The nation which in one generation has produced, recognised and enjoyed Sidney Smith, Thackeray and George Eliot has no reason to defend its capacity either for producing or for enjoying thoughtful laughter. The love of the gently humorous and even of the subtly humorous has become a distinct characteristic reaching farther down in society than many who habitually depreciate Englishmen are perhaps aware. "

THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL

(*C. Kegan Paul, 1878*)

(a new one-volume edition altered and condensed)

*
* *

THE BRITISH QUARTERLY REVIEW. — April 1879.

The Novels of George MEREDITH (pp. 411-425).

Miss A. Shore, the writer of this article, sees in the novel "the efflux of the spirit of the age and the interpreter of human nature"; and in George Meredith one of those writers "whose works have already been stamped with an enduring fame". Too much subtle and profound thought, sometimes indirect expression of his meaning, explain why he does not command universal success; he is made up of philosopher, poet and humorist...

"As a philosopher he stands outside his creations and the world he places them in, and notes with tranquil, impartial, never unkindly sarcasm all the weak points of classes and individuals... His poetical inspiration breathes through single phrases and through whole passages of beautiful nature-picturing, and in the imagery which accompanies his analyses of mental conditions and especially of feeling... as for his humour, it may be defined as the philosophy of the Comic... The grotesque may sometimes be carried a little too far; but on the whole, Mr Meredith's own phrase of thoughtful laughter will well express the sensations that his pleasantry excites."

The seven novels hitherto published are then considered, with special attention to *Beauchamp's Career*.. whose "maturity... sets it as a crown upon all his other works". There is nothing original in Miss Shore's appreciation of the characters or the style.

The last two pages are devoted to Mr Meredith's opinions about the social relations of the sexes, and the final sentence expresses the wish that "he who has seen so well... the different lights in which the most serious problems present themselves to different minds, may by some clear illuminating ray,

cast from his own in some future work, aid in the great task of social regeneration ”.

COPE'S TOBACCO PLANT (vol. II). — May 1879.

An old new book (signed : Sigvat. [James Thomson]).

... “ He may be termed... the Robert Browning of our novelists, and his day is bound to come as Browning's at length has come... Two such earnestly strenuous spirits, swifter than eagles, stronger than lions, in whom... “ the intellectual power and the creative energy wrestle as in a war embrace... ”

THE EGOIST

A COMEDY IN NARRATIVE

(C. Kegan Paul and Co, 1879)

(*Glasgow Weekly Herald*. — June 21 1879 to Jan. 10 1880)

ATHENÆUM. — Nov. 1 1879.

Henley's well known review begins with a splendid eulogy of Mr Meredith who, "in his best work takes rank with the world's novelists." His people "are of the aristocrats of the imagination, the peers in their own right of the society of romance. But for all that, their state is lonely and forlorn. It seems a reproach upon the intelligence of novel-reading mankind that so small a section of the public recognize their true eminence".

Happily, and unhappily, their author is even more to blame for this neglect than his public. Mr Meredith is one of the worst and least attractive of great writers as well as one of the best and most amusing. He is too clever, too brilliant, too epigrammatic. "His stories are not often good stories and are seldom well told".

The Egoist is then described as a comedy in chapters, which, in matter, is worthy of Molière's *Alceste* and *Tartuffe*, but there are defects of form. "There is infinitely too much of statement and reflection, of aphorism and analysis, of epigram and fantasy, of humours germane and yet not called for; so that in the end the impression produced is not the impersonal impression that was to be desired, and the literary egoism of the author of *Sir Willoughby Patterne* appears to overshadow the amorous egoism of *Sir Willoughby* himself, and to become the predominating fact of the book."

After a paragraph of fresh eulogy, Henley concludes that "*the Egoist* is, with *Richard Feverel*, not only one of its author's masterpieces, but one of the strongest and most individual productions of modern literature."

THE EXAMINER. — Nov. 1 1879.

at first criticizes the faults of the book, especially the "ap-

palling prelude, with its imitations of Carlyle, its paradoxes meant for philosophy, and its obscure passages intended for deep wisdom ". This obscurity is not confined to the Prelude. " All the people in the book are given to enigmatic and elliptical utterances. "

The book, however has its merits : with no plot to speak of, yet it is not dull : it is " of absorbing interest, without a single startling accident ". The character of the Egoist is then analysed : " Far from being repulsive, Sir Willoughby often moves our pity, almost our sympathy ", especially towards the end... (quotations are given).

In conclusion, " the happy thoughts of which the Egoist is full afford as much food for merriment as for more serious consideration, and must needs attract the attention to a much greater extent than the involved plots or unnatural surprises which characterise most of our modern novels. "

THE SPECTATOR. — Nov. 1 1879.

" Mr George MEREDITH's New Novel ".

" We have been amused, impressed, bored, and filled with admiration and disappointment by Mr George Meredith's new story... "

After this lively beginning, the reviewer quotes a few of Mrs Mountstuart's sayings, and comments thus : " We are the more grateful to Mrs Mountstuart for these and other luminous hints concerning the people with whom we are brought in contact, because after Mr Meredith has done his best, he does not succeed in teaching us much more about them... "

... " The writer has an individuality : he is a humorist... He often calls up an image of a handsome, witty, polished juvenile cousin of Carlyle, in xviiith century costume, with neat, powdered wig, lace ruffles, knee-breeches and silk-stockings, of keen and curious vision, but too courteous to be profound or stirring, who regards the world as a foolish piece of protoplasm, chiefly valuable as stuff out of which to cut epigrams and apt similes. His thought moves in images, sometimes felicitous, but as often grotesque or obscure. An inability to fall into conventional modes of expression is characteristic of humorists... Mr Meredith is frequently captivating, but he does not know when to stop. We are compelled to question whether he is humorously affected, or only affectedly humorous. He is a sort of modern hermetic philosopher of drawing-rooms ; there is often more novelty in his way of saying a thing than in the thing he says... Of dialogue, he is prodigal,

but it is not characteristic dialogue, or rather it is characteristic of nobody but Mr Meredith.

He describes his characters admirably, piecemeal ; when it comes to the putting of them together, he does it coldly. After closing the book, we feel, in the retrospect, that the style is the most memorable thing about it. It is like a wayward wind blowing against the current of the story, and raising little humorous waves and eddies which both look pretty, and prevent our getting a clear view of what lies underneath. The whole work reminds us of... a picture-puzzle... The result of our inspection of Mr Meredith's puzzle resolves itself into the single word, — "Clever".

* * *

Like Stevenson, Henley was fascinated by *the Egoist* to the extent of writing four reviews of it. The first was in the *Athenæum*, the second in :

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE. — Nov. 3 1879.

"... At its best, his work is of the first order ; at its worst, it is brilliant, but tedious. One of the very few moderns who have the double gift of tragedy and comedy, he is one of the wittiest men of his generation, and an original humorist to boot ; he has studied human nature and human life and he is a master of his native tongue. But with all this he fails of acknowledged pre-eminence in his art. And the reason appears to be that he writes for himself alone... He fatigues and bewilders where, if he so willed it, he could more easily attract and explain. You cannot see what he would do for the sparks he beats out in the doing... »

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Nov. 15 1879.

wonders why Mr Meredith is not popular. He has founded no school, has inspired no enthusiasts. His rate of production perhaps contributes to the same result. The faithful few, however, do not soon forget any one who, while he has amused them, has also made them think...

The Egoist is perhaps the most solid work, even to the verge of toughness, that Mr Meredith has ever produced... It is purely a study of character. "After an outline of the story, the dramatic method of Mr Meredith is again alluded to : he lets the reader know no more about the people than he can see for himself." ... "The only author who has adopted this method is Mr Flaubert, in *l'Education Sentimentale*, which

always reads as if it had been constructed by the process of writing it in feuilletons, and then suppressing every alternate one."

THE ACADEMY [W. E. Henley]. — Nov. 22 1879.

The reviewer reverts to the comparison with Molière.. "Of course, Sir Willoughby's story is as conventionally told as *Alceste's* own. Its personages are not human beings, but compendiums of humanity... *The Egoist*, as far as its *matter* is concerned, is a veritable guide to self-knowledge.

As to *its manner*, that is a very different thing. Mr Meredith's style, it seems to me, has always been his weak point. Like Shakespeare, he is a man of genius, who is a clever man as well; and he seems to prefer his cleverness to his genius... It may be that in the *Egoist* his reckless individuality is less ill seen than in "*Beauchamp*" or "*Emilia*"; it may be that, as the inventor of a literary "genre", he may insist on being criticised according to his own canons. Certain it is that in his *Comedy in Chapters* he has asserted himself more vigorously, if that were possible, than in any other of his works. It is a wilful hurly-burly of wit, wisdom, fancy, freakishness, irony, analysis, humour and affectation, and you catch yourself wishing, as you might over Shakespeare, that Mr Meredith were merely a great artist, and not so diabolically ingenious and sympathetic and well-informed and intellectual as he is. To me it is certainly one of the ablest books of modern years [...]" but "with all its astonishing merits, it will present itself to its warmest admirers as a failure in art, as art has hitherto been understood and practised. Mr Meredith has written for himself, and it is odds but the multitude will decline to listen to him. Nor, so far as I can see, is the multitude alone to blame."

Henley came back to the book in "*The Teacher*" Feb 14 1880.

Meanwhile James Thomson expressed his views under the pseudonym of Sigvat in :

COPE'S TOBACCO PLANT. — Jan. 1880.

He contrasts disparaging words written in a review of "*Richard Feverel*" with the article on *the Egoist* in the *Athenæum*, and quotes from the *Pall Mall Gazette*: "One of the most striking works of our times... of extraordinary merit..."

Then speaking for himself: "Mr Meredith's genius has never shown itself more keen and alert and brilliant, more thoroughly master of all the materials requisite for the work in hand;

... his style has never been more swift and flexible and subtle for piercing to the inmost heart of his personages through the triple armour of conventionality and deception and self-deception. As the work is a Comedy, it abounds in dialogue ; and I have long deemed Mr Meredith's dialogue not only the best of our age, but unsurpassed, if equalled, in our whole literature : it is so spontaneous, unexpected, involuntary, diversified by the moods, the bloods, the nerves, the ever-varying circumstances and relations of the interlocutors... "

Then the chief characters are sketched : Sir Willoughby, Lætitia Dale, Clara Middleton, Vernon Whitford, Colonel de Craye, Dr Corney, Crossjay, the older ladies, Dr Middleton, who receives especial praise.

Leaving aside The New Quarterly Review " So far as popularity is concerned, Mr Meredith's manner may be said to be his only enemy ". (New Quarterley Review Jan. 1880) and The British Quarterly for Jan. 1880, let us turn to :

THE NEW QUARTERLY MAGAZINE, — Jan. 1880.

A good review (pp. 228-232) ending with a comparison of George Meredith and Molière. Sir Willoughby, " the egoistical hero, has all the interest of a distinct individuality, without ceasing to be a type. We pay Mr Meredith a high compliment when we say he makes the reader understand what is meant by Comedy, in the best and fullest sense of the word. "

His style is " a cross between Carlyle's and Browning's " with " treasures of wit and imagination wrapped up in the hard sentences. "

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Jan. 1880.

devotes about twenty lines to *the Egoist*, against thirty to " Mrs Lynn Linton's new Novel " "*Under Which Lord*".

" Mr Meredith is, perhaps, our most artistic novelist, and for that very reason, by no means popular with mere subscribers to Mudie's. His audience is few, but fit. His style may be compared to inlaid work... He is over-fastidious... He overdoes his cleverness. If he was more simple, he would be far more effective. Like all Mr Meredith's novels, *The Egoist* is full of poetry, subtle observation and sparkling epigrams. "

BLACKWOOD'S. — Sept. 1880.

It appears that *the Egoist* proved too much for the reviewer

who found " the first volume fine, the second tedious, the third beyond all expression wearisome ". " Had Mr Meredith confined his book to *one* volume, it might have been a remarkable work. "

[This remark is a sign of the times : The three volume tradition is beginning to lose hold of the public.]

R. L. Stevenson had references to *The Egoist* in his Essay on " *Talks and Talkers* " (1882) and in „ *Books which have influenced me* " (1887). Let us quote from the latter :

" It is art, if you like, but it belongs purely to didactic art, and from all the novels I have read (and I have read thousands) stands in a place by itself. Here is a Nathan for the modern David ; here is a book to send the blood into men's faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art ; ... And *The Egoist* is a satire ; so much must be allowed ; but it is a satire of a singular quality. ... It is yourself that is hunted down ; these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr Meredith (as I have the story) came to him in an agony. " This is too bad of you ", he cried. " Willoughby is me. " I have read *The Egoist* five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again ; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote . I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself. "

THE TRAGIC COMEDIANS

A STUDY IN A WELL-KNOWN STORY

(2 vols. *Chapman and Hall*, 1880)

(Enlarged from the *Fortnightly Review*, where it appeared serially Oct. 1880 to Feb. 1881)

THE ATHENÆUM. — Jan. 8 1881.

Mr Meredith's *Tragic Comedians* is "a study in oblique narration. He has turned the first person of his original (*Meine Beziehungen zu Ferdinand Lasalle*) into the third and added his own comments. ... The plot and much of the conversation are due to Frau von Racowitza, and the interest its characters arouse is as much owing to historical suggestion as to the art of the novelist. What remains as Mr Meredith's own is his style, and this, as every one knows, is peculiarly his own. Mr Meredith has a habit of condensing epigrams into adverbs, and allegories into adjectives, which render his sentences stimulating, but at the same time somewhat hard reading". His style is "congested... overwrought, too full of suggestion".

Quotation follows: "Yes, Ironsides is a fine fellow..."

"As to the matter of the story, Mr Meredith ought to have verified the facts advanced by the Lady. He does not seem to have consulted "*Lasalle's Tod*" of Herr Kutschbach, based on the main on some revelations made by Lasalle's literary executor; though an allusion on p. 74 of the second volume indicates that he has read Mr Ludlow's paper in the *Fortnightly Review* of 1869.

The parallel between Frau v. Racowitza and Mr Meredith's *Tragic Comedians* is at time sufficiently close to merit the name of translation. "We refer our readers to pp. 37, 38, 42, 44, 56, 107, 108, 112, 137, 140 of the German, as compared with pp. 45, 46, 80, 87, 102, 138, 139, 148, 179, 182 of the first volume of Mr Meredith's study.

Such an amount of indebtedness surely deserved some more explicit acknowledgment than George Meredith's final sentences."

The Athenæum was sternly critical; the following, enthusiastic.

THE DAILY NEWS. — Jan. 27 1881.

" Mr George Meredith may well call the hero and heroine of his two latest vols *The Tragic Comedians*. The tragedy of the story is profound, if the comedy of it is fantastical. To turn back from the last chapter, detailing the miserable end of an almost insane passion, and read again the scene in which the two chief actors in it first met, is like taking a survey of human action such as may provoke the gods to amazement and scornful laughter.

... That the events are historical, not fictitious, adds to the excitement of the narration, while it in no way lessens our sense of the skill, brilliance and power of the writer who describes them. It is no less the worthy work of a student of the comedy of life to analyse and explain the strange, abnormal character he finds ready to his hand than to build up from imaginative sources ideal figures which he moulds to his own will.

Fateful and tragic is the story as an old Greek play. "

Critics have come to a sharp division on this story. Henley finds it " tedious ". It made Professor Mac Callum, of Sidney University, " a student of Meredith for life ". I found the style, the latter says, " aglow with passion and thought, the action set forth, the characters interpreted with a grand poetic power ".

POEMS AND LYRICS OF THE JOY OF EARTH

(Macmillan and Co, 1883)

	Pages.
The woods of Westermmain.....	1
A Ballad of Past Meridian (appeared in the Fortn. Review June 1876).....	28
The Day of the Daughter of Hades.....	30
The Lark Ascending (Fortn. Review, May 1881)....	64
Phœbus with Admetus (Macmillan's Mag. Dec. 1880).	71
Melampus.....	79
Love in the Valley (Macmillan's Mag. Oct. 1878 — altered and enlarged from the Sketch published in 1851).....	87
The three Singers to young blood.....	101
The Orchard and the Heath (Macmillan's Mag. Feb. 1868 minus section D).....	105
Martin's Puzzle (Fortn. Rev. June 1865).....	109
Earth and Man.....	115
A Ballad of Fair Ladies in Revolt (Fortn. Rev. Aug. 1876)	130
Sonnets.....	157

THE ACADEMY. — July 21 1883.

Mark Pattison, the reviewer, finds the poems in the present volume "unequal in poetic merit". "*Love in the Valley* is liable to the charge of diffuseness" and so is *the Lay* [sic] *of the Daughter of Hades*. And it has the more serious fault of being a versified treatment of a legend provided by the Greek mythology...

The piece which gives its character to the volume is *The Woods of Westermmain*... The poem teaches... how what we see depends upon what we are; how transcendent influences are only to be approached through the real... It is wholly in your power what you shall make of earth. As you choose to look, she is either a dust-filled tomb or radiant with the blush of morning... "If, looking at her, you put off yourself, sink

your individuality, your rich reward will not only be in the power of understanding, but in a quickening joy, the "joy of earth" showered upon you without stint".

Mr Meredith's peculiar language is then criticized. "He does not "make platitudes into verbal puzzles". His obscurity proceeds from a better motive. He knows that poetry can only suggest and destroys itself if it affirms. And as the moods he desires to suggest are remote from common experience, so also must the suggestive imagery be. Even the English language is inadequate to his requirements, and he tries to eke it out by daring compounds... We have — poppy-droop; swan-wave; ... treasure-armful; circle-windsails; bully-drawlers; and so on without stint or limit."

The quotation of "*Earth's Secret*", as a specimen of the sonnets, ends the review.

ATHENÆUM [Th. Watts-Dunton]. — July 28 1883.

"Manliness and intellectual vigour combined with a remarkable picturesqueness are the most noticeable qualities of his [Meredith's] volume. *The Orchard and the Heath*, *the Lark Ascending*, *the Woods of Westermain* are quoted to illustrate this. A reservation is made concerning the music in Meredith's lines. "He seems to have an ear for iambic rather than anapaestic movements, though, for some reason or other, he seems fond of writing in anapaests..."

"Poetry requires not only intellectual life and emotional life, but rhythmic life, this last being the most important of all." "Throughout the book, there are lines which strike upon the ear like flints... Still, ... such a poem as "*The Lark Ascending*" is enough to show that Mr Meredith has a true call to express himself in metre..."

MERRY ENGLAND [Mrs Meynell]. — August 1883.

"... Mr Meredith is to be congratulated on having faults, and not limitations... The principal of these is obscurity... Again Mr Meredith has a way... of overworking a simile too precisely and insistently... With regard to metrical form, ... he uses quantity in a manner unusual in English or any modern verse. ... Accent is sufficient for poetry which is read in repose."

GLASGOW HERALD. — Aug. 7 1883. — Aug. 14 1883.

In "*Round the World*", by M. D. Conway, one reads: "In these songs, fresh from the soul of this summer, G. Meredith appears to me one of the few poets who greet with joy a dawn

which more famous morning stars of song meet with threnodies of fear and pain. With the unbelief revealed alike in pessimism, philosophy and panic he has simply nothing to do..."

THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW, W. P. Ker. — Sept. 1883.

Contemporary Records : Poetry, by W. P. Ker.

[A review of MEREDITH's Poems and Lyrics, Jocoseria (R. Browning). A century of roundels (Swinburne), Helen of TROY (A. Lang), Love in idleness. La Légende des Siècles (Tome V).]

" The characteristic mark of the poems is the confidence with which they insist that the Earth and Man are not hackneyed or uninteresting subjects. Not all the prose phrases that have ever been spoken or written concerning the unity and variety of Nature, concerning the destiny of man, can depress the spirit of a poet who chooses to forget the prose phrases. These *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* have a fire in them which is dangerous to obstructions and commonplaces. They tear away comfortable theories that put a veil on the mystery of Nature. They are Protestant and destructive ; the poet claims in them his right to disregard what he has not verified, his independence of tradition. He will have none of the superstition that the former glory has passed away from the earth. The earth is beautiful and terrible to anyone who will claim his birthright as a son of the earth, and no nation or time has any special grace in this matter..."

W. P. Ker differs from Mark Pattison in thinking that " the poems taken from Greek legends are not repetitions of old stories ; they are not antiquarian poems about Greek Gods and heroes — they are poems about the earth and its life. " *The Day of the Daughter of Hades* " tells how the Sicilian youth Callistes met the daughter of Hades and Proserpine, when she had risen for one day to the upper air to see the living things on the Sicilian earth, and to sing about them... The dignity of this story, its effectiveness and beauty, come from the real contrast between the majesty of the life of earth and the unrest of the life of man. This idea is no fiction of the poets, and it is this that gives life to the shadowy figure risen from the underworld. " *The Woods of Westermain* " and " *Earth and Man* " are the most difficult poems in the book, perhaps because they have received no help from mythology. They are closely akin in their subject — the progress of man in knowledge, hindered by " his distempered devil of self " which stands between him and the secret of the life of Earth and Man. "

" The style of Mr Meredith's poems is as original as that of his "Comedy in Chapters". The enigmatic sentences perpetually recall the prose epigrams of "*The Egoist*" or "*The Tragic Comedians*". *The Poems of the Joy of earth* are lyrical interludes in the Comedy, reminding the audience that there are things worth attending to besides the vagaries of the actors on the stage. "

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. — Poets of To-day, by W. L. Courtney. — Nov. 1883.

One page is devoted to George Meredith who "has vainly tried to find the soul of Nature, for his own soul, which reflects the soul of things outside, is a "speculum inæquale", too full of artificiality, of poetic conceits, of far-fetched circumlocutions and periphrases, to mirror with perfect fidelity the difficult simplicity of Nature....

The sonnets at the end of the volume, though often ingenious, are rarely musical, and sometimes the lines are more than difficult to scan. On the other hand, nothing but praise should be accorded to... "*Love in the Valley*"; and there are parts of "*The Lark Ascending*" which breathe the true spirit of poetic rapture. If only Mr Meredith would make an effort to acquire... "a song seraphically free of taint of personality", he would be a better artist and a sweeter singer.

*
* *

The period just considered may be termed the period of recognition, even for Meredith the poet. He is now fifty; his critics are mostly younger men who look up to instead of looking down on him. They say he is not only a clever man, but a man of genius as well. They do not always agree about his best work, but they admit that his work, at his best, stands high and look for the reasons of the popular neglect.

*
* *

The next period, which is also the last, is the period of world-fame. For clearness' sake, we shall divide it into three sections :

a) 1884-1891.

b) 1891-1898.

c) 1898-1909.

and consider, separately, for each section the reviews of particular books, and the articles devoted to Meredith's works as a whole.

IV

1884-1909

A

1884-1891

DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS

(The first twenty six chapters) 1884 Fortnightly Review, serially, June to Dec. 1884.

DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS

A Novel, Considerably enlarged from The Fortnightly Review, 1885.

(3 vols. *Chapman and Hall.*)

ACADEMY. (J. A. Noble). — Feb. 28 1885.

George Meredith seems to the reviewer "not so much a novel writer as a singularly brilliant social essayist."

THE ATHENÆUM. [W. E. Henley]. — March 14 1885.

"One of the best of all Mr Meredith's books". ... Neither tragedy, like *Rhoda Fleming*, nor comedy, like *The Egoist*... A common novel, as "*Amelia*", is and, "*Vanity Fair*". It is only the story of a woman's heart and the record of her spiritual growth... No violent incidents, ... but every touch is to the purpose, every sentence packed with significance and luminous with insight.

Diana suggests Mrs Norton, it is true, but she suggests Mr George Meredith still more and Rosalind most of all... The style, singularly luminous and clear. Mr Meredith writes such English as is within the capacity of no other living man". The whole article is most enthusiastic; as though Henley had now come entirely under the sway of Meredith's genius.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. [Cosmo Monkhouse]. —
March 21 1885.

Two Novels.

(The other is : *The shadow of a crime*, by Hall Caine).

" ... Although the author has not neglected the dramatic opportunities suggested by the career of a once celebrated queen of beauty, the problems, social, intellectual, psychological, which it starts, seem to have had the greater fascination for his genius. To construct a character which would fit to known facts; to create a woman dazzling by the brilliancy of her personality, and liable by the very force of the qualities which raised her above the crowd to commit indiscretions unpardonable by the world, was a congenial exercise to his inventive faculty, and the result is a singularly vivid conception, worked out with great literary power. It is to be doubted whether even a poet is a more difficult character for fiction than a witty woman of the world; and amongst all his intellectual and literary feats, Mr Meredith has perhaps never accomplished one more striking than in making us feel that his Diana justified her reputation. He has made her move and speak before us as a living woman, dowered with exceptional gifts of "blood and brains". Of the two, the brains "have it" decidedly. She is too much like Charles II in the contrast between her sayings and doings. The latter are almost invariably foolish. Though not without precedent, she is none the less difficult to credit or to sympathise with in this particular".

Her doings are then criticized in detail... "but of the reality of her brains there is no doubt; she is intellectually the same woman throughout. If she cannot manage her conduct wisely, she can reason about it. Her reviews of her various situations of difficulty, her analysis of her own motives, her arguments for and against herself and the world, are at once clear and subtle, and stirring with vitality. Joyful or joyless, sweet or bitter, they are animated by the same rich intellect, the same noble and passionate soul. They are nearly always witty also; and in saying this we do not allude to those laboured "sayings" of hers with which the book is somewhat overcrowded... " In those "there is too much of Mr George Meredith and espe-

cially of that tendency of his to suppose that a thought is the more profound, the more deeply it is buried in words. What he calls the "literary covering" of his ideas makes his books hard reading even to the hard-headed, and the swiftness and agility of his thoughts requires more intellectual exercise than most readers are able or willing to take. Those who take it will be rewarded not only mentally, but morally; they will experience that pleasant fatigue which follows unusual exertion, and reach that Christian condition which enables them to "suffer fools gladly" for a time".

THE LITERARY WORLD. — April 3 1885.

admits that Meredith is "an original genius" wonderfully clever — perhaps in the opinion of the ordinary reader too clever by half!

The review is *not* a good one, yet some of its strictures prove how much it is necessary to love Diana in order to admire the book. "As we contemplate Diana's brilliant career, conquering the men, hated by the women, the wickedness and hypocrisy of society becomes apparent, and we get another insight into women's rights and wrongs". But, "we do not warm to her in any way..." There is an artificial air pervading the story.

To the wit and wisdom of Diana, the reviewer prefers "those of a happy wife and triumphant mother".

THE SPECTATOR. — April 18 1885.

The story is first considered, and the reviewer's verdict is that "no woman can be wife to one man and Egeria to another without risk of a storm". After one column and a half of such platitudes, the writer goes on: "...Whether Mr Meredith's *apologia* for witty and beautiful ladies who love to skate upon thin ice is a successful one, may be doubted. But, as a literary display, the novel is unequalled. It is written with a cleverness that is almost painful; epigrammatic sentences, phrases stuffed to bursting with meaning..."

The novel is decidedly the best Mr Meredith has given to the world.

The last paragraph is to the effect that "the novelist's art gains nothing by obscurity", and that "an elliptic, compressed and pregnant style is the reverse of artistic, when the wit, humour and suggestiveness of his work can only be extricated by a difficult process of mental decipherment."

*
* *

We mention only the most representative articles, in the way of praise or of blame, but, from February to June 1885 there were about twenty notices of the book. In spite of the *Spectator's* and *Saturday Review's* criticisms of its style, *Diana* was widely read and discussed, for other than literary reasons. The same year, two unauthorised editions were printed in the United States, and the first collected edition of the novels in ten volumes began to appear (Chapman and Hall 1885-1887) simultaneously with an American copyright edition (Roberts Bros., Boston). As a consequence, many were the articles, in England and in America, on George Meredith's Novels or "The Novel and George Meredith". Leaving them aside for the present, let us go on with the criticism evoked by the appearance of his next two books of verse

BALLADS AND POEMS OF TRAGIC LIFE

(Macmillan and Co, 1887)

Those, on the whole, met with a much less favourable reception than the preceding books of poems. To G. W. Foote who reviewed them in *Progress* (July, 1887) George Meredith wrote : " Your remarks on the verses have given me pleasure. They seem to have violently offended very many. "

Henley wrote two reviews, one for the *Saturday Review*, the other for *the Athenæum*.

THE ATHENÆUM. — June 11 1887. [W. E. Henley].

begins with praises of George Meredith for " his sense of the dignity of art and the responsibilities of the artist ; and for the intellectual passion present in his works which makes whatever he does considerable and deserving of attention and respect... Unhappily for us, however, the will is not seldom unequal to the deed ; ... there *is* genius, but there is *not* felicity. He seems incapable of simplicity. We clap for Harlequin and we kneel to Apollo. Mr Meredith doubles the part, and is irresistible in both... He has praised with perfect understanding the lucidity, the elegance, the ease of Molière, and yet his aim in art (it would appear) is to be Molière's antipodes and to vanquish by congestion, clottedness, an anxious and determined " dandyism " of form and style... He is bent upon being " uninterruptedly sublime ", and we must take him as he wills and as we find him. He loses, of course, and we suffer. But none the less we cherish his society, for he has charm as well as power, and once his rule is accepted, there is no means of shaking him off. " *France*, December 1870, and *Phæton* are considered " poetry of a good type and high quality ". " *The young Princess* " and " *The Nuptials of Attila* " are duly praised.

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Sept. 1887.

George Meredith's Poetry-by Arthur Symons.

Contrasting the last two books of poems, the critic notes :

" These two elements, Nature as a source of joy and healing,

Life a tragic tangle form between them the substance or the basis of Mr Meredith's poetry ". but Mr Meredith's art is uncertain : " it is this, and this alone, that can at all render doubtful his claim to a very high place among contemporary poets. "

THE SPECTATOR. — Oct. 15 1887.

An inarticulate poet.

If, as a poet, Meredith has received no adequate recognition, this may be accounted for by the fact that the greater part of his verse is inarticulate. It is in no sense meaningless ; it is simply unable to say what it desires to say. Take as an example the last stanza from "*Bellerophon*" :

*Lo, this is he in whom the surgent springs
Of recollection richer than our skies
To feed the flow of tuneful strings,
Show but a pool of scum for shooting flies.*

How few are those who could reach this and not be repelled ! Yet, what pleasure do they miss who are repelled, who never learn to know the noble chords of music he sometimes strikes !... " The rest of the article is devoted to show... " what a pure and lucid strain of lyric sweetness, what floods of passionate eloquence, are to be found side by side with his crudest and most repellent verse. "

*
* *

It appears that Meredith retaliated on his critics, and that by his special request no copies of his next book of verse were sent out for review. This was :

A READING OF EARTH

(Macmillan and Co, 1888)

Friends however wrote notices of it in

The Scots Observer. — Jan. 26 1889.

Manchester Guardian. — Feb. 4 1889.

The Scottish Art Review (William Sharp). — Feb. 4 1889.

The National Reformer (G. W. Foote). — Feb. 24 1889.

THE SCOTTISH ART REVIEW. — Feb. 4 1889.

W. Sharp reproves those who compare Meredith with others instead of judging him by his own standards... " Mr Meredith is not content to make a sweet sound about nothing... he is not a singer for the sake of singing, so much as a poet for the sake of poetry. There are thoughts and aspirations which he prefers to give forth in verse, concepts of abstract, renderings and interpretations of concrete beauty for which he cannot adequately or even aptly find expression in prose... The finest poem in the volume is the superb *Hymn to Colour* !... There is not a line that is not exquisite in beauty. "

Let us now retrace our steps a little and consider some reviews called up by the first collected edition of the novels.

In "*Time*", a Monthly periodical, Arthur Symonds writes short "critical notices" on :

Evan Harrington. — Nov. 1885.

Harry Richmond. — Feb. 1886.

Sandra Belloni. — March 1886.

Rhoda Fleming. — Aug. 1886.

Beauchamp's Career. — Oct. 1886.

The Egoist. — Dec. 1886.

His is an enthusiast's, more than a critic's tone, so sustained is the note of praise. Yet one can glean useful hints from those notices. From the same pen,

"Robert Browning and George Meredith. — A Note on their similarity" — is to be found in Browning Society's Papers. Part I. Vol. II (1885-86).

THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. *George Meredith's Novels*, by W. L. Courtney. — June 1886.

This is a condescending sort of article, built up on the antithesis of analytic power and constructive genius.

"Mr Meredith, though somewhat obscure owing to the sudden transition of his thought, is never really dull. He may not be interesting in the ordinary sense of the term, but he is eminently stimulating and suggestive. He possesses a wonderful gift of fancy... Though the imagination may sometimes be perversely irritating, it is often brilliant, and at times felicitously illustrative. It is never quite the imagination of the poet, despite the author's ingenious volumes of verse, for it is never instinctive, enthralling, inevitable. But there is the acute penetrative insight of the philosopher, and the imagination of a matured and inventive critic". His view of life is essentially "the view of the middle-aged spectator", in its "absence of joy". "*Diana*" is Mr Meredith's most clever and

successful work, with the one exception of "*Richard Feverel*"!

It is impossible to attribute to him the gift of style, although he has the faculty for many a suggestive and piquant phrase, and he places his characters in an atmospheric background of Nature with true artistic feeling.

How much of Mr Meredith will our children read? Two or three of his novels at most, for "he does not come into the heart". "Yet he is a powerful mind, full of philosophic culture. Some of his sayings will not leave us, even though the total impression be forgotten. This is just what might be expected in the case of a clever student of life, whose analytic power has been fostered at the expense of constructive art."

This is the kind of sour criticism that never takes the trouble to judge an author in himself, but must needs crush him under comparisons.

However, the same year 1886 saw more favourable articles on George Meredith's novels in the *Saturday Review* and the *Spectator*, not to speak of American criticism.

SATURDAY REVIEW. — July 24 1886. — *Mr George Meredith's Novels.*

"Popular literature is the interpretation to the average intelligence of what the average intelligence sees and tries to think... Mr Meredith does not seem to write for the reader, but for himself... He goes into retreat with a problem of character, of conduct and of fortune, which he has to solve... what is wanting in him is that general sympathy with ordinary men and ordinary things which, in the greatest writers, is the background from which what is strange, eccentric and unique stands out in relief.

... All his stories have rather the air... of plays written out. Mr Meredith thinks naturally in drama and in dialogues, in personages variously grouped and variously acting upon each other, and in conflicting and mutually supplementing talk.

... Whoever penetrates beneath the brilliant, though sometimes cold, hard and repellent surface of Mr Meredith's writings, will be rewarded by an affluence of original thought and a variety of clearly conceived and truthfully embodied characters, which he will fail to find in any contemporary novelist."

THE SPECTATOR. — Oct. 16 1886.

has a two-column article, showing the turn of the tide :

"... The evidence of the libraries is that shortly after the publication of *Diana of the Crossways* last year, his earlier books, which before that time had had a most limited circulation, began to be widely asked for; and now it is feared that he may become the subject of a regular cult...

... We should not be surprised if a man who, after thirty years of authorship, appeals to the younger generation, became at the end of another thirty something very like a classic; though, then, of course, he would never be read."

1888 brought another young friend of Meredith's to the fore, viz. J. M. Barrie whose excellent articles on the Novels and the *Short stories* appeared in October and November of this year.

THE CONTEMPORARY REVIEW. Mr George Meredith's Novels, by J. M. Barrie. — Oct. 1888.

If Meredith is not popular, it is on account of his wit that wearies many of his readers. "Mr Meredith is far more than a wit, but wit is his most obvious faculty, and he seldom keeps it in subordination." He will put his wit into the mouths of nearly every one of his characters, whatever their condition may be.

J. M. Barrie then deals with "the three most outstanding figures in Mr Meredith's Gallery of portraits: Sir Willoughby, the countess of Saldar, and Richmond Roy.

"Of pathos of the quieter kind, there is not much in Mr Meredith's works. The wit tends to wrap something round his heart; it is not tears, but awe that he produces."

.. "Mr Stevenson calls "*Rhoda Fleming*" the "strongest thing in English letters since Shakespeare died". I shall only say that Mr Meredith is one of the outstanding men of letters since the Elizabethan age, and that, without dethroning Scott, he is among the great English writers of fiction... To say that he is a wit is not to pronounce the last word. He is the greatest of the wits, because he is greater than his wit."

THE SCOTS OBSERVER. — Nov. 24 1888.

The Lost works of George Meredith.

This is a review of the three short stories which had not been republished since their original appearance in "the New Quarterly Magazine" (Jan. 1877-July 1877-July 1879): although they "have almost as much title to represent him as his longer tales". *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper* is good

comedy ; the closing scene of “ *The House on the Beach* ” is great ; the *Tale of Chloe* is a masterpiece. “ Meredith could not have treated Chloe had he not dug down to the very roots of human nature. ”

TEMPLE BAR. — June 1889.

George Meredith's Views of Women, by a Woman. [Miss A. Sergeant].

Miss S. agrees with Meredith's interpretation of women, so far as their present war with themselves or with society is concerned, but “ a careful examination of his books, and particularly of “ *Diana of the Crossways* ” and “ *The Egoist* ”, tends to convince me that he thinks of woman as of a lesser man, unfairly treated because she is not judged according to the standard applied to man, nor allowed his liberty of action and thought. I grant the unfairness of this kind of treatment, but not the reason given for it. ... The same laws and the same moralities will never fit the two, because where there are root-differences of physical constitution, there are also sure to be root-differences of mind and temper... ”

Nevertheless in the days when the fight was beginning to be waged for the emancipation of women, G. Meredith was considered as an ally by the champions of feminism.

THE SCOTS OBSERVER. — Sept. 28 1889.

“ His (George Meredith's) most resolute partisans are those of his own household : journalists, poets and novelists, students of the art of fiction and practitioners of the noble English tongue. ”

NATIONAL REVIEW. — Oct. 1889.

Fiction, Plethoric and Anæmic, by W. Watson (pp. 167-83).

A vigorous, somewhat “rude and dictatorial”, denunciation of the defects of George Meredith as exemplified from *Rhoda Fleming* : “ an ill-constructed and very unequally written story, having some fine scenes and clever, if equally unattractive, character studies. If only an author could live by virtue of sporadic good things ! But a novelist, at all events, cannot.

TIME. — March 1890.

The Meredithyramb and its critics, by R. Le Gallienne.

This is an answer to the preceding, and other critics,

by a young poet aged then twenty-four, who laughs or scorns away all the objections made to George Meredith.

"Mr Watson and the British public would seem to disagree with Mr Meredith, not because he cannot tell a story, but because he will not tell the particular stories they are alone interested in."

This article made a chapter of the following book:

GEORGE MEREDITH : SOME CHARACTERISTICS,
BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, 1890. (*John Lane*).

A collection of Essays on George Meredith's style and aim, his comic muse, his wit and wisdom, woman in the Novels, *Modern Love* and Nature-Poetry. The attempt of the author, was "just to say some things, which, doubtless, no few lovers of George Meredith could have said better, but which as yet they had kept to themselves." (Preface).

Affixed to the book were "some notes in regard to George Meredith in America", by W. M. Fullerton, another warm admirer of Meredith.

Le Gallienne's essays, some of which have singular felicities of phrase, make stimulating reading. They were eagerly read by an increasing body of enthusiasts and in four years passed through four editions. In 1900 a new edition was issued, containing a bibliography by John Lane, and a postscript by Le Gallienne, dated 1899. The latter bears testimony to Meredith's growing influence upon current thought, "perhaps less directly than indirectly by means of the younger writers he has influenced".

MANCHESTER QUARTERLY. — Oct. 1890.

Mr Meredith's Novels by Allan Monkhouse.

This dull article makes a rather unsuccessful effort to grasp the comic element in George Meredith.

GEORGE MEREDITH, A STUDY, BY HANNAH LYNCH.

(170 pages. *Methuen and Co*, 1891)

A spirited appreciation of George Meredith with some excellent things on his women (particularly Clara Middleton and Diana).

"A thinker first and a novelist afterwards, and not a thinker

only, but a scientific psychologist ", George Meredith has met with slow recognition, owing to the " fatal dulness " of British readers. Shakespearean is the word to describe him. In his very faults [excessive use of artificial illumination ; exuberant display of his own powers] there is an excess of strength. " He does not describe or paint : he simply vitalizes inanimate objects ". *Richard Feverel* and *Rhoda Fleming*, *Evan Harrington* and *Sandra Belloni*, *The Egoist* and *Diana* are then brilliantly analyzed. *Beauchamp's Career* is pronounced dull, owing to its " truly English stuff of Whiggery, Toryism and Radicalism ". [Miss Lynch was an Irishwoman].

B

1891-1897

ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS

(3 vols. *Chapman and Hall*, 1891)

(Appeared serially in *Fortnightly Review*, Oct. 1890, to May 1891 and, simultaneously, in *The Australasian* and *The Sun* (New-York) (Sunday Edition).

PALL MALL GAZETTE. — April 21 1891.

.. “ The congregation will find it [the new book] edifying, but it will not serve as a call to the unconverted. ”

“ Much of it is masterly, but at no point does the story seize us and sweep us breathlessly onwards, as do the great triumphs of Mr Meredith’s genius. ”

The book does not become interesting until about the middle of the second volume.

Eccentricities of diction are criticized.

THE ATHENÆUM. — May 2 1891.

After a long analysis of the novel, the reviewer passes remarks on the literary characteristics of the book, its brilliant things, its epigrams, its fine descriptions of natural objects, its phraseology. “ The vagaries of genius are visible both in grammar and spelling, to say nothing of the daring with which this prose Pindar

per audaces nova dithyrambos — Verba devolvit

to be the stumbling-blocks of simple souls. ” The final prayer the critic puts up in the name of the many is .. “ As he is strong, let him be merciful ”.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — May 23 1891.

is indignant and vituperative.

“ The whole book is a puzzle... The author’s usual faults

of incoherence, prolixity, straining after epigram, seeking after the uncommon, lack of firmness in character-drawing and allusiveness are intensified in his latest work...

Victor Radnor is "one of the most blatant cads we have ever come across"; "Nesta," a mere name, with no more individuality than one of the dancers in a *corps de ballet*.

"Nothing is more curious in the whole novel than the unpleasant relations between husbands and wives. In no single instance do they live together happily or even tolerably..."

"Perfectly meaningless phrases abound". After quoting the first paragraph of the novel, the reviewer proclaims: "This surely is not the way to write."

THE SPECTATOR. — May 30 1891.

Recent Novels.

One of the fashions which puzzle the reviewer is the rise of Mr George Meredith... "Within the past five years, the enthusiasm of a little band of critics has been communicated to a section of the reading public, and it is becoming a common experience to meet cultivated persons who gravely assure us that Mr Meredith is our greatest living novelist... To us this vogue is inexplicable. His books are by no means deficient in imagination; some of them contain passages of considerable power and beauty, and all of them abound in a too generally misdirected cleverness; but so far from being a great novelist, he does not seem to us to possess the qualifications which go to the making of a capable novelist of even the second rank, and, even if those qualifications were his, their effect would be ruined by a literary manner which even in these days of affectation and strain is of unique perversity..."

The story is, "slight, shapeless and very unattractive", the narrative, "clumsily managed". It is "hard to find a simple, natural, unstrained phrase or sentence. So affectedly grotesque a style would ruin even a good novel, and to describe "*One of our conquerors*" as a good novel is impossible".

Six other novels — *New Grub Street* being one of them—are then dealt with.

MODERN LOVE
A REPRINT TO WHICH IS ADDED
THE SAGE ENAMOURED AND THE HONEST LADY
(*Macmillan and Co*, 1892)

*
* *

JUMP TO GLORY JANE

BY GEORGE MEREDITH

edited and arranged by Harry Quilter. With forty-four designs
invented, drawn, and written by Lawrence Housman.

(*Swan Sonnenschein and Co.* — London, 1892)

(originally appeared in *The Universal Review*, Oct. 1889].

prefaced with : “ a note on the writing of George Meredith ”,
whose defects and merits are carefully considered, and “ a
word on the birth, history, illustration and first reception of
“ Jane ”.

“ Forced, feeble and vulgar ” was this “ tedious doggerel ”
according to one authority ; “ silly and incomprehensible ”
growled a second ; “ scarcely likely to add to the author’s
reputation ” sighed a third, and so on throughout the list. ”
(p. 23).

THE TIMES, — Oct. 27 1892.

After quoting H. Quilter, it goes on :

“ The truth, perhaps, is that Mr Meredith has attempted to
embalm, as it were, in doggerel one of the curiosities of reli-
gious mania, and that for whatever there is of grotesqueness,
or pathos in the tale, the reality and not the writer is respon-
sible. ”

[What a change from the *Spectator* criticism in 1862 !]

POEMS

THE EMPTY PURSE, WITH ODES TO THE COMIC SPIRIT,
TO YOUTH IN MEMORY, AND VERSES
(Macmillan and Co, 1892)

SATURDAY REVIEW. — Déc. 17 1892.

The reviewer refuses to blame George Meredith's new cryptographic style for concealment of meaning, much less for meaninglessness. *The Empty Purse*. "the longest and most Meredithian superfluity of verbal gymnastics, is a straightforward, and, on the whole, a sound criticism of life enough, if you must have criticisms of life in poetry". Nor are "*Jump to Glory Jane*", "*Youth in memory*", or even "*The Comic spirit*" "aussi raides que ça". The sense is sound, but "the cookery of the sense — the expression — is all wrong".

"It is probably quite hopeless to ask Mr Meredith why he chooses to masquerade at all: it may be a just punishment for the fools who long ago would neither understand nor admire him. It may be an ungodly private satisfaction to him. It is, no doubt, a great joy to the other fools — the old fools turned inside out — who gape after everything that Mr Meredith chooses to say... But their admiration does him considerably more harm than the others' contempt."

If Mr Meredith really thinks that he cannot speak well, except when he makes "surprise packets" of his speech, he is the most unfortunate, and the most signal, instance of misplaced modesty that we ever met, nay, that we ever heard of. It is very seldom indeed that one finds a man who deliberately abstains from doing what he can do, or prefers to make a "chef-d'œuvre inconnu" of it when he has done it".

LORD ORMONT AND HIS AMINTA

(A novel. 3 vols. *Chapman and Hall*, 1894)

[appeared first serially in *Pall Mall Magazine*. Dec. 93. Aug. 94].

SATURDAY REVIEW. — July 7, 1894.

"The taste for Mr George Meredith's later novels is a sentiment personal, freakish, tiptoeing an impertinent superiority of glance. From a pinnacle of the supercilious it twinkles a cavalier stare : — below, the swinish ; above — the stars. *Georgium sidus* ! "

You see the trick on't, and could scrawl yourself, if bitten by the asp of metaphor, loving the wrong word in the improper place, a wide critique as difficult to read as any novel in this manner done... "

The fable is declared slight and the characters "not winning". "The young dominie is out of place in such a galley as this. And as to the style, we have said enough, or too much ; yet the style is the novel. "

THE ATHENÆUM. — July 17 1894.

"Matey Weyburn is the least interesting of the chief characters, and Aminta... sometimes lacks colour. Lord Ormont and Lady Charlotte are drawn in Mr Meredith's first and most dignified manner ; they ring true at every touch... All the characters are bristling with life and the humour of life.

Mr Meredith provokes a thousand issues whose relation to the story is not easy of detection ; his arguments clamour for debate and answer ; the search-light is turned upon his characters, and less upon their actions than upon the motives which he saw in their actions... He has been compared to Zeus — a rather flippant Zeus, hurling thunderbolts with his right hand and letting off squibs with the left. "

THE BOOKMAN. — Aug. 1894.

An able study by G.-Y., with acute remarks on "the nationality of Mr Meredith's mind... something swifter than English, and not only more agile, but more delighting in agility ; not more emotional or imaginative, but with a keener intellectual sense of the value of emotions and of the part imagination plays in ordinary life".

THE TALE OF CHLOE

THE HOUSE ON THE BEACH. THE CASE OF GENERAL
OPLE AND LADY CAMPER

(*Ward, Lock and Bowden*, 1894)

THE ATHENÆUM. — Feb. 9 1895.

These three stories fall very exactly into the three categories of good, bad and indifferent. The first is as good as the second is bad. "Though no more than what may be called a "drama in Dresden", it is handled with such supreme skill that it becomes really tragic for us, while, never for a moment leaving its proper plane of a comedy of manners".

The House on the Beach is called by Mr Meredith a realistic story. "Unluckily realism in the higher sense, absolute fidelity to nature and to probability, is not within Mr Meredith's province. This story is as much realistic as, say, *Bleak House*".

About the last story, the reviewer says - "What is really fine in it from an artistic point of view is that in which Mr Meredith is always pre-eminent, the subtle delineation of an egoist."

THE YELLOW BOOK, — April 1895,

THE SPECTATOR, — June 8 1895,

say practically the same thing as the *Athenæum* in other terms.

THE AMAZING MARRIAGE

(2 vols. *Constable and Co*, 1895)

Ch. Scribner's Sons

Appeared serially in *Scribner's Magazine*. Jan. to Dec. 1895

THE ATHENÆUM. — Nov. 30 1895.

Mr Meredith belongs to that great school of writers of whom Aristophanes, Rabelais, Montaigne, Fielding are some of the most splendid names... he has a philosophy of life, a brave and strong philosophy, a philosophy of self-reliance and self-repression, but not for that of joylessness. Man is responsible for his own fate is the constant burden of his theory.

... George Meredith uses his philosophy to explain his story ; smaller writers invent their stories to expound their theories. It is interesting in this connection to notice how frequently he takes some actual character or some historical event as the subject of his novels. To explain seemingly incongruous events and apparently irrational people by making them live...

Among the glorious company of George Meredith's women, Carinthia Jane, the wife wedded in mockery, is great. Fleetwood "has no plan and so he fails ; his actions are all jerks and impulses".

As to style, it is not so obscure as it is often represented to be ; it is undoubtedly over-elaborate, but it is with the elaboration of one who refuses to clothe great thoughts in slipshod language".

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE. — Nov. 16 1895.

Mr. Meredith's New Novel

... has to a superb degree Mr Meredith's two great qualities movement and fulness ; movement which makes other novels seem slow in comparison, and fulness beside which the most laboured are thin."

A whole column sums up the story.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Dec. 21 1895.

analyses the method of Mr George Meredith. After sketching the characters of Lord Fleetwood and Carinthia, it goes

on : " And set about these two are the *eyes*, the wonderful chorus of characters which Mr Meredith uses so persistently and with such amazing effect. The difficulty and peculiar individuality of his style lie not so much in his phrasing, distinctive though it is, as in his method of telling his story indirectly, through the means of puppet proxies. It is in her failure to understand this, in her endeavour to suggest Meredith by mere verbal inversions and obscurities that " John Oliver Hobbes " shows the insufficiency of her study of her master.

... It may be Mr Meredith sometimes carries his indirect method to excess, and puzzles a decent public, nourished on good healthy marionettes. But we can find it in us to return thanks even for his excesses. And assuredly, this book is as fine, and vigorous, and subtle as anything he has ever written "

THE PALL MALL GAZETTE. — Dec. 23 1895.

The Amazing Marriage is " undoubtedly a masterpiece by a master hand ... " " Mr Meredith stands towering above his contemporaries, distinguished by an especial power of delicate, intricate analysis ; of a passionate energy of imagination ; of a style that grips and holds the mind ; of a subtle sense of humour ; of a lightly-poising mockery ; and of a romantic rare refinement of attitude towards the world that is his and ours alike, truly, but in how different and humbling a degree of possession !

THE BOOKMAN. — Jan. 1896.

In spite of a few faults here and there, the book is the best work Meredith has given since "*Diana of the Crossways*". ... And it reveals Mr Meredith's sympathies more openly than almost anything else in his prose. He is the Welshman here, and Wales may be proud to claim "*the Amazing Marriage*".

THE SPECTATOR. — Jan. 25 1896.

in a three column article on " Recent Novels " devotes less than one column to the new book of George Meredith which is " rich in shrewd observation, in wise reflection, in witty epigram ", but as a whole, " terribly hard reading for the natural man... "

" Mr Meredith might have had a place beside Thackeray ; he has chosen a place beside Lily, and only the intellectual vigour of much of his work will prevent the new Euphuism — a great literary nuisance it is ! — from being as short-lived as the old ".

In 1896, a complete limited Edition de luxe began to appear. It was followed in 1897 by the "new popular edition" in 18 vols, and in 1898 by a reprint of the same (pocket edition) in 17 vols.

In accordance to our plan, let us now consider the chief articles written on George Meredith in England from 1891 to 1897.

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. — March 1892.

Mr Meredith and his Poems by Prof. Edw. Dowden (reprinted in "New Studies in Literature" 1895). A defence of George Meredith's poetry. "Perhaps Mr Meredith's style is difficult; but difficulty is a relative term"... Prose is proved by the achievement of his 40 years of authorship to be the main stream; verse is no more than a slender affluent. But both are *Dichtung*, and both, it may be added, are *Wahrheit*..."

A propos of "*Modern Love*", Prof. Dowden refutes the critic of the *Spectator* (1862).

THE NOVEL REVIEW. — May 1892.

Meredith for the Multitude by R. Le Gallienne. In this article, the writer shows that Meredith's work has the fundamental qualities of great work, viz, passion and humanity, along with qualities, depending on his individual gifts, of poetry, humour, wit and wisdom, and points out his remarkable complexity.

LIBRARY REVIEW. — May 1892.

Mr Meredith and his Critics, by F. Graham Aylward.

A string of aptly chosen quotations illustrating Meredith's attitude towards his critics.

LIBRARY REVIEW. — July 1892.

The critics on Mr Meredith, by F. Graham Aylward.

Another string of quotations illustrating the general failure of the critics to appreciate him.

NEW REVIEW. — March 1893.

George Meredith as a Journalist by F. Dolman.

gives extracts of the Ipswich Journal to which Meredith contributed leading articles and news-notes in the early sixties.

TEMPLE BAR. — April 1893.

George Meredith.

A balanced appreciation of George Meredith *as a storyteller*, whose characters illustrate "the wisdom gained through a large and penetrating observation of humanity". He reminds the writer of Jean-Paul, with whom he has in common "a certain tortured obscurity of phraseology", a genuine love of romance, and also an immense, unswerving grasp. His horror of the simple and the commonplace has influenced his style and the delineation of his minor characters, which often look unreal owing to a slight touch of caricature.

FREE REVIEW. — Aug. 94.

George Meredith. by Ernest Newman.

A close if sometimes bitter criticism of the construction and style of the *novels*. "The jerkiness and inarticulation of the novels as a whole reappear in the individual characters", but Meredith's psychological skill serves him to make them look consistent. His "vivid imagination that has empowered him to write pages of the most virile and suggestive prose... is answerable for some of his woeful distortions of language".

FREE REVIEW. — Oct. 1894.

The Poetry of G. Meredith, by W. Wharton.

Mainly about the conception of nature, of man, of the relations between the sexes as exemplified in the Poems. "A belief in the prerogative of brains is the keynote of Mr Meredith's system."

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Nov. 1894.

George Meredith's Nature Poetry, by W. F. Revell [pp. 506-523].

A very good analysis — with a running commentary — of *The woods of Westermains*, *Earth and Man* and a *Faith on Trial*. Incidentally, George Meredith's conception of Nature is compared with that of Browning.

THE EDINBURGH REVIEW. — Jan. 1895.

Mr Meredith's Novels. [pp. 33-58].

The reviewer admires the novels of the first period, which ends with *Evan Harrington*, and " finds little meaning " in the others.

THE YELLOW BOOK. — April 1895.

Mr Meredith in Little, by G. S. Street.

" As a manipulator of words to express complexity of thought he has no peer. "

AUTHOR. — May 1 1895.

Nature as interpreted in the Poems of George Meredith,
[by Ramsay Colles] (pp. 319-321).

Meredith has succeeded Wordsworth as the High Priest of Nature. Quotations are made to illustrate his interpretation of Earth.

THE MANCHESTER QUARTERLY. — Oct. 1895.

The Novels of George Meredith, by J. H. Bocklehurst.
[pp. 340-352].

An able sketch by an admirer of George Meredith's style and creations.

FORTHIGHTLY REVIEW. — May 1896.

The Women of George Meredith, by Garnet Smith,
pp. 775-790.

A rather condensed study, emphasizing the divergence of George Meredith's women from the early Victorian type of woman, and the possible conflict between George Meredith the moralist and George Meredith the artist.

TEMPLE BAR. — June 1896.

The Novels of George Meredith, by F. Mary Wilson Parsons [poor].

THE IRISH MONTHLY. — Aug. 1896.

Nature interpreted by George Meredith's Poems, by Ramsay Colles.

THE FREE REVIEW. — Sept. 1896.

Nature Lessons from George Meredith, by H. S. Salt.

GREAT THOUGHTS. George Meredith's Heroines.

By Frances E. Ashwell.

- I. Lucy Desborough. — Oct. 3, 1896
- II. Rhoda Fleming. — Nov. 4, 1896.
- III. Sandra Belloni. — Dec. 26, 1896.
- IV. Diana of the Crosways. — Jan. 23, 1897.
- V. Clara Middleton. — Feb. 27, 1897.
- VI. Carinthia Jane. — March. 20, 1897.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Xmas number 1896.*The Victory of Aphasia Gibberish*, by Max Beerbohm.

an amusing parody of Meredith's style and dialogue.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — March 27 1897.*Meredith on Comedy*, by G. B. S. (George Bernard Shaw).

The English playgoing public positively dislikes comedy. The Englishman fears nothing more than the comic spirit, which would cure his moral unconsciousness ; but he clings to that, for he profits by it.

YELLOW BOOK. — April 1897.*Concerning Preciosity*, by J. M. Robertson.

" Mr Meredith's style is the most pronounced outbreak of preciosity in modern English literature " preciosity being taken to mean verbal affectation. The critic explains this æsthetic defect as the result of " individual self-will, defiance of censure... and self-absorption in isolation ".

NINETEENTH CENTURY. — May 1897.

The Apotheosis of the Novel under Queen Victoria, by Herbert Paul.

" Mr George Meredith has long stood, as he deserves to stand, at the head of English fiction... His style is not a classical one ; but it suits Mr Meredith, as Carlyle's and Browning's suited them, because it harmonises with his thought. "

CHURCH QUARTERLY REVIEW. — July 1897.*The poetry of George Meredith*, [pp. 386-403]

expresses his individual philosophy, a spiritual philosophy of courageous faith, akin in some respects to that of Wordsworth, but informed by the later spirit of scientific realism.

Nature, with him, is nature as revealed to us by science,

the eternal activity, the nature that overflows with individual life and he finds this view " vitally poetic and inspiring ". For this he will be remembered. His poetry of Nature lays firm hold of reality.

The aim of Mr Meredith's art is neither to persuade nor to tranquillize. It kindles energy because energy is its preponderating quality, and if he has not cared to provide for his readers the graces and harmonies to which they have grown accustomed, compensations are not wanting.

PRIMITIVE METHODIST QUARTERLY REVIEW. — July 1897.

George Meredith's Novels, by M. Johnson.

A second-hand sort of article, declaring George Meredith " after all possible deductions have been made, one of the most outstanding men of letters since the Elizabethan age ".

QUARTERLY REVIEW. — July 1897.

The Novels of George Meredith [page 159-182].

" Mr Meredith's judgement is not equal to his genius ": he exhibits his intellectual versatility at the expense of his art. His greatness consists in the breadth of his humour, of his design, of his characterisation, not in truth of detail.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW. — Oct. 9 1897.

Mr Meredith as a poet.

The writer dwells on the drawbacks rather than on the merits of Meredith's verse and cannot forgive them " for not being really in the true sense poetry at all ".

THE BOOKMAN. — Nov. 1897.

Mr Meredith's poetry.

" There never was a less languorous, a robuster poet. The common, healthy man would heartily approve him if he could but make his speech a little plainer — for though he mostly drops his mannerisms in verse, his syntax is often maddening ".

[The two foregoing articles were elicited by the appearance of George Meredith's *SELECTED POEMS* 1897, Constable].

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. — Nov. 1897.

A note on George Meredith, by A. Symons.

In this note, A. Symons tries to throw a light on George Meredith's secret through a consideration of his technique.

George Meredith is essentially a poet, who " struggles against the bondage of prose ". " A style conceived in verse, and brought up on Arabian extravaganzas and German fantasies, could scarcely be expected to adapt itself to the narration of the little, colourless facts of modern English Society... "

Every novel of Mr Meredith is a series of situations, rendered for the most part in conversation, as if it were a play.

... A Congreve who is also a poet.

C

1898-1909

ODES IN CONTRIBUTION TO THE SONG OF FRENCH HISTORY

(*Constable* 1898)

[*France* December 1870, had appeared in the Fortnightly Review Jan. 1871 and been reprinted in Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life.

The Revolution, Napoléon and Alsace-Lorraine appeared in the March, April and May numbers of *Cosmopolis* 1898].

ACADEMY. — March 12, 1898.

A letter of Francis Thompson expresses his amazement.

"I am in tune with most audacity, but Mr Meredith leaves me gasping..." "The Ode is wonderful, though an unlawful wonder... The poem has a devil in it... No youth could rival the nether furnaces of this production of age."

ACADEMY. — April 9 1898.

"This is not the kind of poetry we read for pleasure".

SATURDAY REVIEW. — Nov. 12 1898.

After reproving "the desire to dazzle and deafen", the critic winds up: "This ambitious cycle of odes had better have been left unattempted."

LITERATURE. — Nov. 26 1898.

"In *France*, December 1870, Mr Meredith has managed to view the Titanic world-struggle of contending races as much

with the impersonal and impartial eye of the historian as with the all-embracing sympathy of the poet... Throughout the other odes, there runs the same consciousness of the essential unity of this mighty, age-long drama, but if his political philosophy has remained unchanged, the parasite of intellectual subtlety has overgrown and disfigured the parent stem of Mr Meredith's genius...

... The purely intellectual part.. has mastered the emotional part, and the foaming torrent of his vocabulary has submerged both.

Surely posterity will believe that there has been a mistake in dates. " France ", it will be said, is the work of the poet's maturity, while the other contents of the volume show all the unchastened exuberance, all the uncritical flamboyancy of " green unknowing youth ".

THE ATHENÆUM, — Dec. 24 1898,

strikes the same note, admitting that " imaginative force there is, without rival in modern poetry, fertility of language, pregnancy of meaning, — but clear, but ordered, but noble in its rhythmic dignity, one finds only in " *France, December 1870* "

" Carlyle turned metrist " sums up the criticism.

BOOKMAN. — Dec. 1898.

Mr Meredith's Odes to France, by A. M. [Alice Meynell].

" Mr Meredith's *Odes to France* are not mild eulogies of the talents and the prowess of a great neighbour : they are not flatteries designed to soothe. His fearless friendship is of the virile... kind ". Then the form is criticized : " it is, indeed, a strange irony of fate that the lucid genius of France should be sung in such desperately tortured and turgid strain ". The obscurity arises from " a defective expression and a carelessness of beauty ". Nevertheless, certain portions are " marvels of brilliant energy, genuine kindling fires lighting the sky ".

A READING OF LIFE

WITH OTHER POEMS

(pp. 127. *A. Constable and Co*, 1901)

[Among "*other Poems*" are the "Fragments of the Iliad in English Hexameter verse", some of which appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, April, 18, 1891, *Foresight and Patience* [*National Review*, April 1894], *Forest History* (*Literature*, July 9 1898) and *The Night-Walk* (*Century Magazine*, Aug. 1899).]

SATURDAY REVIEW. — July 13 1901.

"Mr Meredith has almost all the qualities of a great writer, but some perverse spirit in his blood has mixed them to their mutual undoing... In prose he would have every sentence shine, in verse he would have every line sparkle; almost every picture is good, but each suffers from its context."

A general review of his poetical work follows, with severe criticisms of his defects. Yet, when all is said, it remains that "no writer of our time has been loftier minded, subtler in intelligence, or more instinctive in feeling."

THE ATHENÆUM. — July 20 1901.

"Mr Meredith's resolve to astonish is stronger than his desire to charm, and he lets technical skill carry him into such excesses of ugliness in verse as technical skill carried Liszt, and sometimes Berlioz, in music... He has harmony, without melody.

He may have, more or less consciously, imitated the French in seeking after rarity of rhyme.

"Mr Meredith hammers out his rhymes on the anvil on which he has forged his clanging and rigid pointed words".

"And he disdains the common subjects of poetry, as he disdains common rhythms, common rhymes and common language. Almost the whole of his last book is a reasoning in

verse. By his enormous vitality he does much to give human warmth to arguments concerning humanity. But in taking for his foundation the stone which the builders rejected he is sometimes only giving a proof of their wisdom in rejecting it ”.

LAST POEMS

BY GEORGE MEREDITH

(*A. Constable and Co*, 1909)

[About twenty poems having appeared in various newspapers and magazines between 1901 and 1909].

THE ATHENÆUM. — Nov. 6 1909.

“ Poetry, for George Meredith had always in it something of an athletic strain. He achieved it not so much by rising into the regions of light and fire as by knitting his thoughts together till... fire and light burst forth ” He reminds one of the jewel-cutter .. “ The sonnets read, so to say, like epitaphs upon their themes... ”

The last poems we read “ for their priceless echoes of a memorable past ”. They are rather a personal than a literary document.

CELT AND SAXON

(*Constable*, 1910)

Although this review stops at George Meredith's death, we must mention the posthumous publication of this fragmentary novel which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* from January to August 1910 and in book-form the same year.

THE SENTIMENTALISTS.

an unfinished comedy, which appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* August 1910 and was reprinted in the 22nd volume of the Memorial Edition. 1910.

In this section, the general criticisms of Meredith are arranged under two heads : articles and books.

ARTICLES

ACADEMY. — March 12 1898.

Mr Meredith and Fame.

The sub-title is : In praise of Shagpat. The question is asked : " Why is not Shagpat more widely read ? "

" Meredith has far too much warmth, is far too sympathetic to have ever been indifferent to the lack of wide appreciation, though the best was never wanting. "

ACADEMY. — October 12 1898.

Mr Meredith's Early Poetry [signed E. K. C.]

ACADEMY. — Nov. 5 1898.

An able summary of Meredith's nature poems.

BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE. — Nov. 1898.

Some opinions, by A. B. C. D.

[The Novels of George Meredith] : Mr Meredith is the great psychologist of comedy... As novels of human character, Meredith's novels are above those of Thackeray and Fielding. He is the one great writer of comedy alive.

BOOKMAN. — April 1899.

George Meredith and Thomas Hardy.

GOOD WORDS. — July 1899.

Mr George Meredith, by W. S. [W. Sharp].

A general article dealing with Meredith as the romancist, the realist, the comedian, the tragedian and the poet of the Joy of Earth.

BOOKMAN. — Nov. 1899.

George Meredith, by Hannah Lynch.

Miss L. reconsiders some of her own opinions, as expressed in her former "Study". She liked Meredith's style better ten years ago than to-day.

She compares Meredith's novels with Wagner's operas: only Mr Meredith is "too intellectual to sink into the extreme and moving depths of simplicity and poignant naked passion that Wagner reaches in the glorious death scene of Tristan..." That is Meredith's great vice: he is too ruthlessly intellectual... too witty, too laboured, too satirical, too humorous. Genius should be more simple and more sincere. Sincere it is, but simple it is not.

After comparing Meredith and Stendhal, Miss Lynch praises George Meredith's landscape, "so richly, vividly, variously portrayed"... Here is the magician, here is the poet, here is the writer of splendid prose. Elsewhere, he may exasperate; here only does he enchant."

ACADEMY. — May 5 1900.

George Meredith and his critics.

HUMANE REVIEW. — Oct. 1900.

George Meredith's writings, by Sidney Olivier.

Mr S. Olivier considers the application of Meredith's philosophy of nature to some ethical and social questions, to sentimentalism, egoism and the right relations of the sexes.

ACADEMY. — March 9 1901.

On obscurity in verse.

A plea for Meredith's obscurity, which is always fathomable and fruitful.

INTERNATIONAL MONTHLY. — Sept. 1901.

The Historic place of George Meredith and Thomas Hardy,
by Edmund Gosse.

NEW LIBERAL REVIEW. — Nov. 1901.

Politics in G. Meredith's Novels, by R. Maynard Leonard.

A review of the part played by politics in Meredith's novels, and especially in Beauchamp's Career.

MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE. — March 1902.

Samuel Richardson and George Meredith.

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS. — April 1902.

The conception of nature in the poems of George Meredith,
by Miss F. Melian Stawell.

This is an important contribution to the study of Meredith's philosophy, as it tries to reconcile various conflicting statements, and does not minimise the difficulties of an avowedly spiritualistic interpretation. "Nature, he believes, not only sends us after a good which is our good, but she whispers that we can reach it" ... "Nature is another partial expression of the same ultimate Power working for good that stirs in us, a Power which is greater than either of its manifestations, which in the end is ruler of all". The heroic temper of Meredith's faith is emphasized, as are his relations to Wordsworth, Browning and Whitman.

WESTMINSTER REVIEW. — Nov. 1902.

Intellectual apathy and the influence of Meredith, (by C. F. Silver).

The transcendent quality of Meredithian literature is intellectual energy; turbulent, stimulating, baffling suppression.

ACADEMY. — Oct. 3 1903.

Mr Meredith as Poet.

Excellent remarks on the technique of Meredith who "in his research of condensed speech, falls into much the same pitfalls as Browning". His metre is "more habitually and blamably rough than Browning's". But there are exceptions: "*Love in the Valley*" "sings itself like a brook in the woods", and in *The Nurtials of Attila* "the metre uncoils from the knottiness characteristic of Mr Meredith, and descends like a cataract...; at times, it fairly leaps and bounds with its inward fury."

"Through sheer strength, it seems that his poetry, despite its much formidableness, shall be read with strenuous delight".

HUMANE REVIEW. — Jan. 1904.

Nature Lessons from George Meredith, by H. S. Salt.

BOOK MONTHLY. — March 1904.

A King of Letters, a personal appreciation of Mr George Meredith, by Henry W. Nevins.

After a description of the man and a tribute to his kindness to younger men, his admiration for France is mentioned.

"The great movements of the world rather than pure literature interest him. ... It is a natural quality of his being to see things in the large."

REVIEW OF REVIEWS. — March 1904.

G. Meredith, by W. T. Stead.

The record of various conversations with George Meredith.

PALL MALL MAGAZINE. — May 1904.

Literary Geography : the Country of George Meredith, by William Sharp.

An illustrated article dealing with Surrey, Box Hill and Meredith.

DAILY CHRONICLE. — July 1904.

The record of an interview with George Meredith (by H. W. Nevinnson).

[Important declarations on Fear and the fear of death.]

INDEPENDENT REVIEW. — July 1904.

The poetry of G. Meredith by G. M. Trevelyan [See below].

GREAT THOUGHTS. — Oct. 1904.

Some aspects of George Meredith, by G. K. Chesterton.

A thoroughly appreciative article dealing chiefly with Meredith as "an optimistic reformer".

WESTMINSTER GAZETTE. — Feb. 9 1905.

The record of a talk with George Meredith, (by Mr G. H. Perris).

INDEPENDENT REVIEW. — May 1905.

The optimism of Browning and Meredith, by A. C. Pigou.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW. — July 1905.

Optimism and Mr Meredith. A reply [to the preceding].

HIBBERT JOURNAL. — July 1905.

Mr Meredith on Religion, by James Moffatt D. D.

A statement of the orthodox view of the soul's deathlessness contrasted with Meredith's "undue disparagement of the human personality, as if it necessarily involved some taint

or alloy of individualism ". Dr Moffatt's argument helps to understand Meredith's view.

SPECIAL COURSES MAGAZINE' OF THE NATIONAL HOME READING UNION. — Oct. 1905 to June 1906.

Nine papers on G. Meredith's novels and poetry by Walter Jerrold, E. G. Morley, M. B. Smith and A. W. Verrall.

Professor Verrall's paper on *Diana of the Crossways* and the wit of George Meredith is the best of all and has been reprinted in his "*Literary Essays*". (Cambridge University Press, 1913).

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS. — April 1906.

Some thoughts underlying G. Meredith's poems, by M. Sturge Henderson [see below].

INDEPENDENT REVIEW. — Dec. 1906.

George Meredith's Hymn to Colour', by Basil de Salincourt [see below].

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. — Dec. 1907.

The Succession of Mr Meredith, by Laurie Magnus.

Meredith continues Wordsworth: " His message brings to fuller completeness the psychological structure of Wordsworth's emotional faith in the common direction of all nature, conscious, sentient and inanimate alike... He is " the reconciler between Wordsworth and Darwin ". " He observes as closely as Tennyson, he contemplates as subtly as Wordsworth, but he adds to the message of Wordsworth's revealing agency the confidence waived by Tennyson ".

[Cf. *English Literature in the XIXth century*, an essay in criticism, dedicated by permission to George Meredith].

ALPINE POST. — Jan. 1908.

The Alps in George Meredith's Novels, by Dr E. Dick.

*
* *

On February 13th. 1908, George Meredith's eightieth birthday, a great number of articles appeared in the British Newspapers : let us mention, as more especially worthy of notice, those in the Daily Telegraph and in the Westminster Gazette (the latter by M. Sturge Henderson).

Of course, there was much indiscriminate praise in the ordinary journalistic style, but nevertheless it was the tribute of the nation to her living genius. And so were the articles elicited by the death of George Meredith on the 18th. of May 1909. Appreciations of the great Victorian, memoirs, personal memories, signed or unsigned, poured in from every quarter.

An interesting letter, from an anonymous lady, was published in the *Morning Post* of May 19.

THE SPECTATOR. — May 22, 1909.

had a good article striking the right note :

“ To the youngest among us he was always the apostle of hope and courage, the most modern of the moderns, and yet a classic. ”

But the best thing penned on the occasion was J. M. Barrie's moving tribute to his friend :

THE DAY, AS THEY SAY, OF HIS FUNERAL.

[reprinted by A. Constable and Co].

CONTEMPORARY REVIEW. — July 1909.

The moral philosophy of Meredith (by G. K. Chesterton) compares Meredith with Dickens, Hardy and Henry James, and emphasizes his paganism, or pagan mysticism “ Meredith always sought for special and solid symbols to which to cling ”. In *a Faith on Trial*, “ all his agonies are answered not by a synthesis or a cosmology, but suddenly by a white cherry-branch in bloom .. ” “ Fantastic as he was, he was a fighter ”.

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. — July 1909.

Some Recollections, by Edward Clodd,

recall some “ obiter dicta ” of George Meredith. [reprinted in E. Clodd's *Memories*].

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW. — Oct. 1909.

Meredith as publisher's reader, by B. W. Matz.

BOOKS

What marks this decade, is the increasing number of criticisms of George Meredith in book-form.

WALTER JERROLD : *George Meredith*, an Essay towards Appreciation, 1902.

is dedicated " to Edward Clodd, fit friend of one of our greatest ". This book of 190 pages comprises four chapters :

- I. The Man. A biographical sketch.
- II. The Poet [merely skims the surface].
- III. The earlier novels [up to the *Egoist*]
[Good things about *Farina*].
- IV. The later novels [nothing very striking].

G. M. TREVELYAN : *The poetry and philosophy of George Meredith*. 1906. (Constable).

This is the work of an intelligent lover of Meredith's poems, who had the advantage to know their writer personally and managed to say the essential things in 225 pages. The four chapters of the book are so full of matter that it is well-nigh impossible to summarise them.

I. The qualities of Meredith's poetry are defined (many quotations from *Modern Love*, *Love in the Valley* and *The Nuptials of Attila*).

II. The causes and nature of Meredith's obscurity are then traced : mostly due to style, they are occasionally due to subject matter.

III. Meredith's philosophy of Earth is defined and contrasted with the views of Wordsworth, Browning and Swinburne.

IV. Meredith's attitude towards the universe commands his ideas about life and their application to conduct. His philosophy of love, his comic spirit, and finally his social and political ideas are examined.

The conclusion is " that very rarely has there come among us

a man so original, yet so sane, a spirit so new, yet so harmonious with the "old heart of things".

Great in the history of Meredithian criticism is the importance of this book, which has left its mark, more or less, on every study published in the following decade. His success called for a second impression in 1907 and for a third in 1912 (Pocket edition).

The same year 1912, Mr Trevelyan edited the complete edition of Meredith's Poems in one volume with explanatory notes of much value.

JAMES MCKECHNIE. The Shaving of Shagpat, an interpretation of Meredith's allegory. Glasgow, 1906.

[afterwards enlarged into a book: Hodder et Stoughton London, 1910].

A. J. K. ESDAILE. Bibliography of the writings in prose and verse of George Meredith. 1907.

A most useful work by a life-long student of Meredith.

OLIVER ELTON. Modern Studies [E. Arnold]. 1907.

Much valuable criticism is compressed in the sixteen pages of Professor Elton's study of Meredith.

"To read him is like climbing and calls for training and eyesight, but there is always the view at the top, there are the sunrise and the upper air".

A propos of his women compared with those of Balzac, he calls Meredith "one of the masters of spiritual life", and then deals with his conception of the comic spirit, his philosophy of Earth and finally his style.

HENDERSON (MAY S.). George Meredith, novelist, poet, reformer. 1907. [XXII chapters]. (Methuen).

This book is chiefly valuable for the chapters XIV to XVII by Mr Basil de Selincourt, in which Meredith's poetry is considered. There are many interesting remarks, but, as a whole the various subjects under consideration hang loosely together; it is not so in the chapter XIV which attempts to analyse and define "the conception of Earth as a great spiritual unity,

embracing both Nature and Man " and in the following ones, which state " the message that Nature has to offer to Man ", (ch. XV) Meredith's conception of Man (ch. XVI) and finally consider Meredith as artist and craftsman (XVII) Throughout those chapters runs a veiled controversy with Mr G. M. Trevelyan, with whom Mr de Selincourt does not always agree.

CURLE (RICHARD H. P.). Aspects of George Meredith.
London, G. Routledge and Sons. 1908.

Fifteen chapters, the last being entitled " Last words on Criticism, Method and some omissions ".

Mr C's methods is not " scientific criticism, which is still non-existent as applied to Meredith "; he aims at " an exegetical interpretation " of Meredith, but too often " is drifting idly in a sea of abstract words ". As a matter of fact, the book gives us an insight into Mr C's mind more than into Meredith's. The various papers on Character, on Tragedy, on Death, on Love, on Egoism, on the comic spirit, which form the core of the book contain, besides mere truisms masking as profundities, some very subtle and suggestive reflections.

FORMAN (M. B.). G. Meredith. Some early appreciations.
1909.

Mr Maurice Buxton Forman, working at his bibliography of George Meredith, which will be a considerable monument, found and printed those twenty three appreciations " by a select band of Meredith's early admirers, from Ch. Kingsley (1851) down to Mark Pattison (1883).

HAMMERTON (J. A.). George Meredith in Anecdote and Criticism. (Grant Richards). 1909.

" To present a survey of all that has been printed about George Meredith and his art ", and to give at the same time " some slight account of Meredith's life and friendships ", such was the aim of Mr H. whose laborious work would have been still more useful, if he had kept to the chronological order. The amount of Meredithiana collected within the 390 pages of this volume is truly formidable.

MOFFATT (JAMES). George Meredith, a primer to the novels. (Hodder and Stoughton). 1909.

This is a fit companion to Mr Trevelyan's book. Although

modestly presented as a "descriptive report of each novel" in chronological order, it reveals an intimacy with Meredith's works and English novelists which renders his remarks highly serviceable to all students of literature. An introduction of sixty five pages gives a sketch of Meredith's general aims and method. The Comic spirit represents an attitude of mind to life, ... "creative and instructive as well as critical...; the wit of wisdom, sly, shrewd and sympathetic..." able to cure the two cardinal foes to health and progress in contemporary life: Pride and Sentimentalism.

His ideals of manhood and womanhood are then shown running up into his general conception of human nature as part of Nature, and some salient features in his technical method are indicated by one who realizes that "Meredith is a peer of the few great literary artists in our age."

SCLATER (J. R. P.). The Sons of Strength. 1909.

The religious ideas of Meredith's poems are used "as a basis for exhortation rather than for exposition" by a lecturer to Sunday classes in the New North Church, Edinburgh, who finds that Meredith's ethical teaching is the teaching of Christ re-stated in other terms.

CONCLUSION

Our survey must stop here, for, with the death of Meredith, a new period begins : the editing of his Letters by his son (1912), the books of Dr Crees (1916) and Mr Ellis (1919-20) have determined fresh reactions in the literary circles of England, and lack of balance still marks most criticism of the present day.

We trust that some of the quotations herewith included point clearly to some of the reasons why Meredith was so slow in coming to the fore. He wrote poetry, or fantastic, imaginative prose, in days when plain earnestness was most in demand, and when certain subjects were tabooed as unmoral. In 1849, a young poet, "A", was warned that "he would not escape unscorched, if he chose to trifle with the public by verifying dreamy, transcendental excuses for laziness, for the want of an earnest purpose and a fixed creed" ¹. The warning was repeated in 1853, when "Empedocles on Etna" appeared. In the fifties, the moral tone of a Matthew Arnold could be censured. No wonder then, if mid-victorian puritanism was offended by "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel", and by "Modern Love". Woe to the writer whose book could not be perused by young maids ²!

As a consequence, Meredith had to give up all thought of being (what his ambition was) primarily a poet, and to

1. *Fraser's Magazine*. May 1849.

2. Cf. E. H., *supra*, p. 22.

devote himself to the writing of fiction. But other novelists were in the field with whom it was not easy to compete : Dickens and George Eliot. When Meredith dealt in humorous caricature, he was accused of copying the former. When he depicted farm life, as in Rhoda Fleming, critics thought he was trespassing on G. Eliot's ground.

What if he wrote wholly original books like *Sandra Belloni* and *Vittoria* ? He was found either to write with a purpose or to task his reader's attention too much. Generally speaking, few critics, if any, could appreciate his works on their own merits, judge them with an independent mind. None had authority enough to say to the public : " This rises far above the common sort of novel ". They emphasized minor defects, even when aware of high merits, for public opinion dictated, or at least influenced, their verdicts. A masterpiece, like *Harry Richmond*, was far from being an overwhelming success. In the sixties, critics followed, instead of guiding, public opinion ¹.

It was Beauchamp's Career, with its politics and topical allusions, that attracted general attention. Henceforth the name of George Meredith became familiar in the newspapers. His " matter " being no longer discussed, adverse critics were to find fault with his " manner ". But a small band of enthusiasts was there, ready to fight for the master, " the King of us all ", as Stevenson called him. They might admit defects, but in the lessening of energy that is characteristic of the later xixth. century, their elder appeared as a force of nature, to be ranked with the Elizabethan dramatists. To those who said " Congreve " they replied " Shakespeare " ! By 1890, they had won the day.

Meredith could do what he liked, write as he pleased. So in " *One of our Conquerors* " he " wrote his best in

1. Cf. *Essay on Comedy*... " Our critics appear to be fascinated by the quaintness of our public, as the world is when our beast-garden has a new importation of magnitude, and the creature's appetite is reverently consulted.

" They stipulate for a writer's popularity before they will do much more than take the position of umpires to record his failure or success... "

perversity " ¹, sure to puzzle the blind, exasperated critics. He had once been pelted with unpleasant missiles, it was now his turn "to beat them with briars. "

The first years of the xxth century brought him true fame. No longer discussed, he was ably interpreted to the attentive public by an increasing number of intelligent persons. Even those whose ideas differed from his own could not help bowing to him.

Since the end of the great war, the two contrasted voices persistently heard from the beginning of Meredith's career are to be heard anew, whenever a work of his is mentioned. He is found too earnest, too "Victorian", too "bourgeois" by many a critic. Yet his influence is still felt, and, although one may hope that by 1928 some balance will be struck, those variations of taste and violent antagonisms show how much vitality his work preserves.

1. The phrase occurs in *Diana*

Vu le 26 avril 1922.

*Pour le Doyen de la Faculté des Lettres
de l'Université de Paris :*

L'Assesseur,
H. DELACROIX.

VU ET PERMIS D'IMPRIMER.

Le Recteur de l'Académie de Paris :
P. APPELL.

CONTENTS

	Pages.
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	ix

I. — 1851-1861

POEMS BY GEORGE MEREDITH (1851)	1
THE SHAVING OF SHAG PAT, AN ARABIAN ENTERTAINMENT (1856) .	6
FARINA, A LEGEND OF COLOGNE (1857)	12
THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL, A HISTORY OF FATHER AND SON (1859)	16
EVAN HARRINGTON (1861)	21

II. — 1862-1871

MODERN LOVE, AND POEMS OF THE ENGLISH ROADSIDE, WITH POEMS AND BALLADS (1862)	25
EMILIA IN ENGLAND (1864)	32
RHODA FLEMING (1865)	37
VITTORIA (1867)	40
THE ADVENTURES OF HARRY RICHMOND (1871)	43

III. — 1871-1883

BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER (1876)	48
ON THE IDEA OF COMEDY AND THE USES OF THE COMIC SPIRIT	55
THE EGOIST, A COMEDY IN NARRATIVE (1879)	58

	Pages.
THE TRAGIC COMEDIANS, A STUDY IN A WELL-KNOWN STORY (1880)	64
POEMS AND LYRICS OF THE JOY OF EARTH (1883)	66

IV. — 1884-1909

A. — 1884-1891	71
DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS (1884)	71
BALLADS AND POEMS OF TRAGIC LIFE (1887)	75
A READING OF EARTH (1888)	77
B. — 1891-1897	84
ONE OF OUR CONQUERORS	84
MODERN LOVE, A REPRINT TO WHICH IS ADDED THE SAGE ENA- MURED AND THE HONEST LADY (1892)	86
POEMS, THE EMPTY PURSE, WITH ODES TO THE COMIC SPIRIT, TO YOUTH IN MEMORY, AND VERSES (1892)	87
LORD ORMONT AND HIS AMINTA (1894)	88
THE TALE OF CHLOE, THE HOUSE ON THE BEACH, THE CASE OF GENERAL OPLE AND LADY CAMPER (1894)	89
THE AMAZING MARRIAGE (1895)	90
C. — 1898-1909	98
ODES IN CONTRIBUTION TO THE SONG OF FRENCH HIS- TORY (1898)	98
A READING OF LIFE, WITH OTHER POEMS (1901)	100
LAST POEMS (1909)	102
CELT AND SAXON (1910)	103
ARTICLES	104
BOOKS	110
CONCLUSION	115

